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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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TN Guv Ravi asks students to chant 'Jai Sri Ram'

CHENNAI, 13 APRIL

A controversy has emerged after Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi encouraged students to chant 'Jai Sri Ram' at an event in Madurai. While addressing attendees at a private engineering college on Saturday, the Governor, as the chief guest, prompted the students to repeat the slogan after him. Congress MLA JMH Hassan Maulaana condemned the remarks, labelling them as inappropriate for someone in the Governor's constitutional position. He accused Ravi of aligning with the ideologies of the RSS and BJP, suggesting his behaviour undermines the neutrality expected from the role. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: X

Pinarayi's constituency 1st to be poverty free

KANNUR, 13 APRIL

Dharmadam, the Assembly constituency represented by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, has become the first in the state to be declared free of extreme poverty. "Dharmadam becomes the first Assembly Constituency in Kerala to be declared extreme poverty-free!" Vijayan posted on X on Sunday. He added, "With less than 1% of our population in extreme poverty, we are now working towards declaring the entire state extreme poverty-free on November 1 — a milestone in our journey of inclusive development. #KeralaModel." He had earlier stated that Kerala has the lowest poverty rate in India The state aims to achieve this goal as part of the fourth-year celebrations of the second Vijayan-led Left government. *—PTI*

Caste report bats for hiking BC quota to 51% in State

Report says they constitute 70% of the State's population

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

The caste census report submitted to the Karnataka Cabinet has recommended increasing reservation for Backward Communities (BCs) from the current 32 per cent to 51 per cent, citing their population at nearly 70 per cent of the State's total.

The Socio-Economic and Educational Survey, commonly referred to as the caste census, proposes 51 per cent reservation for BCs in educational institutions, aligning with models in Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand, which offer 69 per cent and 77 per cent reservation respectively.

As per the report, the population of OBCs stands at 4.16 crore out of the 5.98 crore surveyed. This includes 34.96 lakh in Category 1A, 73.92 lakh in 1B, 77.78 lakh in 2A, 75.25 lakh in 2B (including Muslims), 72.99 lakh in 3A, and 1.54 crore in 3B.

PHOTO: FREEPIK, AI IMAGE GENERATOR

As per the report, the population of OBCs stands at **4.16 cr** out of the 5.98 crore surveyed.

Additionally, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) have a combined population of 1.52 crore — with 1.09 crore SCs and 42.81 lakh STs. The general category population, in contrast, is about 29.74 lakh.

The report, originally initiated in 2015 by then Congress CM Siddaramaiah and overseen by former State Backward Classes Commission Chairperson H Kantharaj, was completed under the current Chairperson K Jayaprakash Hegde in February 2024.

If implemented, Karnataka's total reservation would rise to 75 per cent, combining 51 per cent for OBCs, 17 per cent for SCs, and 7 per cent for STs.

However, the report faces stiff opposition.

Dominant communities such as the Vokkaligas and Lingayats have labelled the survey as "unscientific" and are demanding that it be scrapped and a fresh survey conducted.

Political analysts say the report could turn into a contentious issue for the Congress-led government, especially ahead of upcoming elections, as it may trigger protests or demands from powerful caste groups. *—PTI*

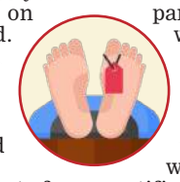
RAPE ALLEGED

Hubballi girl found dead; suspect killed in encounter

HUBBALLI, 13 APRIL

A man who allegedly kidnapped and killed a five-year-old girl in Hubballi was killed in an encounter with the police on Sunday. A policeman was injured during the operation.

The girl was allegedly kidnapped and killed by 35-year-old Nitesh Kumar on Sunday, police said. The incident occurred at the Ashok Nagar police station limits here and the body was found in an abandoned building, they said.



The accused, a resident of Bihar's Patn,a attacked a police team after they caught him, and despite firing a warning shot, he tried to run away, officials said.

The man also faced a case of rape along with murder under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Outraged by the girl's murder, a large number of residents of the locality gathered in front of Ashok Nagar police station and protested.

The victim's family hails from Koppal. Her mother worked as a housemaid and as an assistant at a beauty parlour, while her father worked as a painter, he said.

"The mother had taken the girl along with her to a house in the locality, where she was working. An unidentified man had taken the girl from there. On searching, she was found dead inside the toilet in a small sheet-roofed building in front of the house. She was rushed to hospital but was declared brought dead," he said. *—Agencies*

After Bengal, Assam sees violence over Waqf Act

GUWAHATI, 13 APRIL

Protesters threw stones while the police used batons at a rally held against the Waqf (Amendment) Act on Sunday when agitators and police clashed in Cachar of Assam, a senior official said.

The official told PTI that several hundred people hit the streets in Berenga area of Silchar town without permission to protest the recently enacted legislation.

"Around 300-400 people were protesting by blocking the road. When we tried to clear the path, a few of them threw stones at us. We had to use mild lathi-charge to disperse the crowd," he added.The area has been cleared now, the official said. He said that a case has been registered, but no one has been detained or arrested yet. The protestors showed black flags and shouted slogans against the BJP government, demanding repeal of the Act. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday claimed that the state police had a "strong intelligence" report that there could be "some disturbances" during protests by the minority community against the Waqf (Amendment) Act. *—PTI*

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Police lathicharges protesters during a demonstration over Waqf Act in Assam's Silchar on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

City man sets himself ablaze outside Raj Bhavan

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

A man attempted to immolate himself outside Raj Bhavan on Sunday evening, allegedly driven by harassment from his wife.

The man, reportedly a resident of RT Nagar in City, poured petrol on himself from a bottle he had brought, but was swiftly rescued by security personnel posted at the high-security premises.

Eyewitnesses said the man appeared visibly distressed and claimed he had been pushed to the edge due to constant mental and emotional abuse. He also accused the police of failing to act on his complaints.

"My wife has been harassing me. I even survived an attempt on my life. I have no option left but to end my life," the man was heard shouting moments before the rescue.

According to sources, the man had written a detailed multi-page suicide note outlining his grievances and the alleged neglect by authorities. Police from Vidhana Soudha station took him into custody shortly after the incident and are currently verifying his claims. *—Salar News*

KARAGA DAZZLES BENGALURU

A priest carries a floral pot on his head as he takes part in a procession celebrating the centuries-old Karaga festival, held in honour of Goddess Droupadi, near the Dharmaraya Temple in Bengaluru in the early hours of Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Russia strikes Indian drug firm in Kyiv

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

A Russian missile struck the warehouse of Indian pharmaceutical company Kusum Healthcare in Ukraine on Saturday, the Ukrainian embassy in India has claimed. In a post on social media platform X, the embassy alleged that while Russia professes a "special friendship" with India, it is deliberately targeting Indian businesses operating in Ukraine.

"Today, a Russian missile struck the warehouse of Indian pharmaceutical company Kusum in Ukraine," the statement read. "While claiming 'special friendship' with India, Moscow deliberately targets Indian businesses — destroying medicines meant for children and the elderly."

No further details regarding the strike were immediately available. Meanwhile, British Ambassador to Ukraine, Martin Harris, stated that Russian drone strikes had destroyed a major pharmaceutical warehouse in Kyiv. "This morning Russian drones completely destroyed a major pharmaceuticals warehouse in Kyiv, incinerating stocks of medicines needed by the elderly and children," Harris said.

Kusum Healthcare, according to its official website, operates in 29 countries including Ukraine, Moldova, Kenya, and Ethiopia. *—PTI*

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Leave in 30 days: US to immigrants

MESSAGE TO ILLEGAL ALIENS:
A WARNING TO SELF-DEPORT
Benefits:
Self-deportation is safe. Leave on your own terms by picking your departure flight.
Keep money earned in the U.S. If you self-deport as a non-criminal illegal alien.
Future opportunity for legal immigration. If you self-deport using CBP Home instead of being deported by ICE.
Possible Flights Home. You may be eligible to a subsidized flight if you cannot afford to leave.
Consequences:
Immediate deportation. You will be apprehended by DHS with no opportunity to get your affairs in order beforehand.
Fines and penalties. A fine of $998 per day if you received a final order of removal and stayed.
A fine of $1,000 - $5,000 if you fail to self-deport after claiming that you will.
Possible imprisonment. If you fail to self-deport, you may be subject to jail time.

In a post on X, the Department of Homeland Security asked foreign nationals to self-deport **PHOTO: @DHSGOV**

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has issued a stern warning to undocumented immigrants, urging them to self-deport or face heavy fines and possible imprisonment. In a statement titled "Message to Illegal Aliens," the DHS declared that all foreign nationals who have been in the US for over 30 days must register with the federal government. Failure to comply is now considered a criminal offence.

Those who do not register or self-deport could be fined up to USD 998 (approximately RS 85,900) per day following a final deportation order. An additional fine of USD 1,000 to USD 5,000 will apply to those who inform authorities of their intent to leave but then fail to do so. Non-compliant individuals also face imprisonment and a permanent ban from re-entering the US legally. The DHS, under President Donald Trump is promoting self-deportation. *—PTI*

India to decline zero-for-zero US tariff deal

The proposed bilateral trade agreement between India and the US is advancing, but a "zero-for-zero" tariff strategy, suggested by some trade experts, is unlikely due to the differing economic development levels of the two countries. Such an arrangement may be possible between developed economies like the US and the EU, but India and the US will likely pursue a broader "package" deal covering various issues beyond tariffs.

NETIZENS DEBATE

Amid language row, Hindi removed from KIA display boards

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in the city has dropped Hindi from its display boards, retaining only Kannada and English—a move that has triggered a wave of heated reactions on social media.

07:46
Departures
Page 2 of 3
STD ETD Airline Flt No Destination Status Gate
08:50 08:50 IndiGo 6E 5216 ಮಂಗಳು ಭಧ್ರತೆ 23
09:00 09:00 IndiGo 6E 312 ಹೈದರಾಬಾದ್ 12
09:05 09:05 IndiGo 6E 6288 ಅಮೃತಸರ 28
09:15 09:55 IndiGo 6E 5256 ದೆಹಲಿ 14
09:25 09:25 IndiGo 6E 524 ಅಗರ್ತಲಾ 36
09:35 09:35 IndiGo 6E 7731 ಶಿವಮೊಗ್ಗ 26
09:45 09:45 IndiGo 6E 6558 ವಾರಣಾಸಿ 43
09:45 09:45 IndiGo 6E 307 ಅಗ್ತಾ ಜೋರಿಯಾ 12
09:45 09:45 QP 1323 ಗುವಾಹತಿ 35
09:50 09:50 IndiGo 6E 6583 ಗೋವ 42

A video clip on X, viewed over two million times, shows flight announcements in Kannada, English—but notably, not in Hindi. Critics called the decision "illogical", questioning why English was reta ined while Hindi was excluded. Others defended the move, saying it reflects State's longstanding resistance to Hindi imposition.

Many Kannada-speaking users welcomed the decision, calling it a reaffirmation of linguistic and cultural identity in a federal nation where language often doubles as a political flashpoint.

"This is not about hatred for Hindi—it's about asserting regional pride," wrote one supporter.

However, dissenting voices raised concerns about practicality. "Airports cater to everyone. Removing Hindi just alienates a large number of domestic travellers," a user wrote. Another said, "Even Dubai uses Hindi to connect with Indians, but in India, we're busy erasing it from public spaces."

The debate ties into a broader national discourse on language politics, especially in southern states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, where pushback against Hindi is deeply rooted.

While airport authorities have not issued an official statement, the change is being interpreted by many as more than a mere signage update—it's a cultural message in bold letters. *—Salar News*

India gets laser weapon to shoot down drones

India has successfully tested a high-power laser direct energy weapon to shoot down a drone with high precision. The Defence Research and Development Organisation developed the system, which fired a laser beam and destroyed the target. India now features in the exclusive group of nations having the system. This counter drone system engages targets with lightning speed and cuts through them with a laser beam, leading to their structural failure. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

Kalaburagi man killed in wife's maternal home

KALABURAGI, 13 APRIL

A 28-year-old man was murdered on Friday after visiting his wife's maternal home. A case has been registered at Brahmapur Police Station against 10 individuals, including his wife and her brother. The victim, Anandkumar Shamarao of Gazipur, was allegedly stabbed by his brother-in-law Tony Natikar, 24, who has since been arrested. Two months ago, Sneha left for her maternal home, police said. When Anand visited to bring her back, a heated argument ensued. Tony and others reportedly refused to let Sneha return, and in the altercation, Tony stabbed Anand in the left leg. Anand later succumbed to the injuries. —*Salar News*

City auto driver attacked over feud, accused on the run

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

A personal feud turned violent in the early hours of Sunday when an auto driver was attacked with a knife by a former friend in Hanumanthanagar. The incident occurred around 4am when Potharaju, the victim, had parked his auto near Raghavendra Block in Srinagar after returning from a Karaga celebration. The accused, Dheekshith, allegedly recognised the vehicle, smashed its windshield in anger, and fled. On being alerted, Potharaju rushed to the spot, leading to a heated argument. During the confrontation, Dheekshith reportedly pulled out a knife and attacked Potharaju, injuring two fingers. The injuries required immediate medical attention. Police sources revealed that the two were once close friends but fell out over personal disputes. The attack is suspected to have stemmed from lingering resentment, particularly over an incident where Dheekshith felt insulted by Potharaju. The Hanumanthanagar police have registered a case and launched a manhunt for Dheekshith, who remains on the run. —*Salar News*

Youth rescued from suicide attempt at MM Hills Temple

MYSURU, 13 APRIL

A youth suffering from mental illness was rescued after attempting suicide by climbing the temple tower (gopura) at MM Hills temple in Hanur, Chamarajanagar, on Sunday. Identified as Mrityunjaya from HD Kote, the youth was seen in a viral video chanting "Uge Uge Madappa (Oh my God)" before attempting to jump. Alert staff from the Srikshetra MM Hills Development Authority intervened and safely brought him down. The temple staff later sent the youth home. Police confirmed he was suffering from depression. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. —*Salar News*

'Govt won't rush on caste census'

Ashoka demanded the report be withdrawn and a new survey be conducted

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday said his government will not take any hasty decision regarding the Socio-Economic and Education Survey report, popularly known as the caste census, which was recently tabled before the state cabinet.

Shivakumar said that communities were trying to protect their interests in view of the caste census and there is nothing wrong in it.

"Veerashaiva Mahasabha is trying to protect its community's interests, why should we criticise them? They can put forward their stand as per the Constitutional provisions," he said while referring to criticism of caste census by leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa.

He said the Cabinet will go through the report and discuss it, and will do justice to all based on the facts, as he also called the statements being made against the report as "political".

DK Shivakumar PHOTO: PTI

> **Previously, Lingayats were considered the largest caste in the state, followed by Vokkaligas and Dalits. However, the new report claims Muslims are the largest caste. Despite various sub-castes within Muslims, they have not been separated, while certain sub-castes among Vokkaligas have been categorised**
>
> —R Ashoka, BJP leader

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader R Ashoka demanded that the report be withdrawn and a scientific report be prepared by conducting a door-to-door survey.

Speaking to reporters, Ashoka claimed that Siddaramaiah has worked to divide castes and religions. "Previously, Lingayats were considered the largest caste in the state, followed by Vokkaligas and Dalits. However, the new report claims Muslims are the largest caste. Despite various sub-castes within Muslims, they have not been separated, while certain sub-castes among Vokkaligas have been categorised," he said

He accused the report of inflating the numbers of communities that vote heavily for Congress and unfairly targeting Vokkaligas, Lingayats, and Dalits.

The report was placed before the Cabinet by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes on Friday. It will be discussed at a special cabinet meeting scheduled on 17 April.

The Commission, under its then Chairman K Jayaprakash Hegde, had submitted the report to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on 29 February last year, amid objections raised by certain sections of society and voices against it from within the ruling Congress.

"The CM has spoken about it. I have not yet seen the report as I was visiting Belagavi and Mangaluru yesterday (Saturday). It has to be discussed in the Cabinet. Apparently, the CM has said that it will be discussed in the Assembly, too. No one will take any hasty decision," Shivakumar said.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge refused to comment on the report, "I have no information about what will be discussed in the Cabinet, or what is in the report. When I get the report, I can say something. If any decision is taken in the 17 April Cabinet meeting, I can react to it," he said. —*PTI*

Muslim-pleasing may lead to WB-like situation: BJP MP

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

Alleging that Hindus are being forced to flee from the violence-hit Murshidabad district of West Bengal due to the "dangerous politics of appeasement" Mamata government, BJP leader PC Mohan on Sunday said the Karnataka Congress' "appeasement tactics" could lead to a similar fate in this state.

He described reservation of 4 per cent of public contracts for Muslims as an "appeasement tactic".

"What's happening in Murshidabad is a direct result of the West Bengal State Government's dangerous politics of appeasement, forcing Hindus to flee. Karnataka Congress's appeasement tactics, like 4 per cent Muslim reservation in government contracts, could lead to the same fate. Wake up, Hindus!" Mohan wrote on X. —*PTI*

BEAUTY IN DIVERSITY

Children hold crosses made of palm leaves to mark Palm Sunday at St Andrew's Church in Bengaluru on Sunday. Palm Sunday is a Christian feast that falls on the Sunday before Easter; Members of the Sikh community gather at a Gurudwara in Bengaluru to offer prayers and celebrate the festival of Baisakhi PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

BTM layout molester finally arrested

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

City police on Sunday arrested the man accused of molesting a college student near BTM layout's 2nd Stage from Kerala, following public outrage over a viral video of the incident.

The accused, a native of Tamil Nadu, allegedly groped a female student returning from a tea stall around 2am on 3 April. The victim and her friend, both from another state and staying in a PG accommodation in Suddaguntepalya, were walking back when the man, riding a scooter, intercepted them in a narrow lane and behaved inappropriately before fleeing.

Although the students initially refrained from filing a complaint, a bystander recorded the act and uploaded the footage online. The video quickly went viral, sparking public anger and renewed debate over women's safety in the city. The government also faced criticism for its perceived inaction.

Taking swift action, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast Division) Sara Fatima formed four special teams under an Assistant Commissioner of Police to trace the suspect. Once it was confirmed that the accused had fled the city, police teams were dispatched to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and parts of northern India. Investigators scanned over 1,000 CCTV feeds around the crime scene to trace his movements.

Eventually, one of the teams tracked the accused to another State where he had gone into hiding. Further details are awaited. —*Salar News*

5 City homeowners booked for renting to foreigners without proper papers

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

In a renewed crackdown on foreign nationals residing illegally in the City, the Crime Branch (CCB) has registered five separate FIRs against homeowners for renting properties to foreigners without following legal procedures.

As per regulations, landlords must submit 'Form-C' to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) within 24 hours of accommodating a foreign national, and only after receiving clearance.

However, acting on intelligence inputs, the Narcotics Wing of the CCB found that several property owners had rented out homes to at least 10 foreign nationals without submitting Form-C or obtaining FRRO approval. Raids were conducted, and cases have been booked under the Foreigners Act and relevant IPC sections.

The offences were registered in Ramamurthy Nagar, Banaswadi, Parappana Agrahara, Soladevanahalli, and Varthur police station limits. Police confirmed the foreign nationals lacked valid documents and were produced before the FRRO. They have been sent to the Foreigners Detention Centre pending further proceedings.

This comes days after a similar operation saw two foreign nationals deported after being tracked down in Kengeri and Amruthahalli.

Police have urged landlords to strictly comply with foreigner registration laws, warning that further raids are planned as part of a broader enforcement drive across Bengaluru. —*Salar News*

Jawan drowns while trying to save boy in Bagalkot

BELAGAVI, 13 APRIL

A soldier on annual vacation drowned while attempting to rescue a 14-year-old boy from the Malaprabha River in Bagalkot on Sunday. Both the soldier and the boy lost their lives.

According to police, the boy, Shekhappa Muttappa Mulimani, an 8th-grade student from Hansanur, had gone alone to bathe in the river near Manneri in Badami. Unable to swim and caught in the strong current, he began to drown and screamed for help. Hearing the cries, Mahantesh Hosamani, a soldier from Gadag, jumped in to save him. He managed to reach the boy, but the duo were swept away with a current. —*Salar News*

SIT confirms Bhovi corp scam links to Jeeva suicide case

BENGALURU 13 APRIL

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the suicide of lawyer Jeeva submitted a 2,300-page final report to the High Court, confirming key allegations mentioned in her suicide note and establishing links to the Rs 34-crore scam in the Karnataka Bhovi Development Corporation.

The report includes forensic evidence, post-mortem findings, and an analysis of Jeeva's 13-page handwritten suicide note. Sources confirm that Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Kanakalakshmi's name figures prominently, with evidence of mental harassment during CID interrogations.

S Jeeva, 33, had died by suicide at her residence in Banashankari on 22 November after being summoned by CID officers in connection with a scam involving Rs 34 crore, of which Rs 7.16 crore was transferred to Jeeva's firm, Annika Enterprises, and Rs 3.79 crore

DySP Kanakalakshmi PHOTO: X

to Harnitha Creations, registered under her sister's name.

In her suicide note, she alleged she was being mentally and physically harassed and interrogated without formal notice.

Following Jeeva's death, her younger sister Sangeetha filed a complaint accusing CID officers of humiliation and extortion. Based on her complaint, Banashankari Police registered an FIR against CID personnel under sections related to abetment of suicide and corruption.

The SIT's findings now pave the way for possible legal action against the officers involved. —*Salar News*

Around 6,000 lorries, including those from neighbouring states, will remain off the roads PHOTO: SALAR

Lorries across State to strike from tomorrow

BENGALURU 13 APRIL

The Federation of Karnataka State Lorry Owners and Agents Association (FKSLOAA) confirmed a Statewide lorry strike on 15 April.

The association is pressing for five demands: rollback of the 2.73 per cent sales tax hike on diesel, withdrawal of Bengaluru's no-entry rule for goods carriers, reduction in Fitness Certificate fees, safety for drivers, and relief from rising vehicle maintenance costs.

Speaking to reporters in City, association president Shanmugappa said, "Goods vehicles will stop operations from 12am on 15 April. We will not call off the protest until our demands are met."

The strike is likely to affect the supply of construction materials like M-sand and jelly, and groceries across the state. Around 6,000 lorries, including those from neighbouring states, will remain off the roads. Movement of milk and emergency medical services will not be disrupted. Taxi operators have extended their support to the protest. —*Salar News*

Tension in Kolar as forest officials seize tractors

KOLAR, 13 APRIL

Tension gripped Kethaganahalli Gate in Srinivasapur taluk on Saturday morning after Forest Department officials arrived to seize tractors used by farmers to plough disputed land. The land had previously been reclaimed by the department as forest land.

Villagers staged a road blockade and burnt tyres in protest. Amid the chaos, a farmer named Nagaraj attempted self-immolation by pouring petrol on himself. However, alert police and locals intervened and prevented the act.

The dispute began on 5 April, when villagers allegedly ploughed forest land, claiming it belonged to them and citing a pending court case. While villagers argued that a stay order was in place, forest officials asserted that the court had directed maintenance of status quo, prohibiting any activity on the land.

Taking serious note of the violation, the Forest Department filed FIRs against 13 individuals and returned on Saturday to seize the tractors involved.

So far, three tractors have been confiscated, and efforts are on to seize two more.

Range Forest Officer Ravi Keerthi confirmed that no arrests have been made yet. —*Salar News*

FOR ROAD WIDENING

Activists enraged as Mysuru axes 40 trees

MYSURU, 13 APRIL

The Mysuru City Corporation (MCC) has come under sharp criticism after over 40 large trees were axed on a 600m stretch between SP Office junction and a hypermall in Nazarbad on Sunday as part of road widening works.

The move has triggered outrage among environmentalists, especially as they had opposed the tree felling just two days ago. The trees were cut down early in the morning, reportedly to avoid resistance from activists and locals.

According to Mahadevaswamy, a resident, the Forest Department had only granted permission to trim branches. However, the contractor awarded the tender allegedly felled entire trees and transported the logs in trucks.

The trees were cut down early in the morning, reportedly to avoid resistance from activists and locals PHOTO: SALAR

"The trees were worth lakhs of rupees, and this looks more like a timber operation than a civic project," he said.

Environmentalists have condemned the action, noting that such felling has become increasingly frequent across the city. "Birds are losing their natural habitats. The forest department must stop approving large-scale tree cutting in the name of development," said Umamahesh, a Mysuru-based environmentalist. —*Salar News*

> According to Mahadevaswamy, a resident, the Forest Department had only granted permission to trim branches. However, the contractor awarded the tender allegedly felled entire trees.

Mandya man booked for assault, forced conversion

MYSURU, 13 APRIL

Srirangapatna Police in Mandya have registered a case against a man and eight of his family members for allegedly assaulting his wife and mother-in-law after they refused to convert to Christianity.

Srikanth, a resident of Palahalli village, allegedly pressured his wife Lakshmi and her mother Shruthi, both devotees of Goddess Chamundeshwari, to convert. Lakshmi's brother, Ravikiran, stated the couple had been married 15 years and issues began recently after Srikanth's family converted and built a church. He also alleged prior dowry harassment involving Rs 25 lakh.

The victims were reportedly attacked with sticks on Saturday. —*Salar News*

Hundreds flee violence-hit Murshidabad

BJP likens the violence over Waqf Act to partition; TMC flags misinformation; 12 more arrested

KOLKATA, 13 APRIL

Hundreds of people affected by communal violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad district crossed the Bhagirathi River and took shelter in adjoining Malda, officials said.

The local administration has arranged for accommodation and food for the fleeing riot-hit families, while deploying volunteers at the river bank to assist those arriving in boats.

Several areas in Muslim-majority Murshidabad witnessed violent protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act that spiralled into communal violence.

"The number of people who have arrived till Saturday night crossed 500, with most of them being women," Deonapur-Sovapur gram panchayat pradhan Sulekha Choudhury said.

"We escaped from Mandirpara area of Dhulian as our houses were set on fire and women and girls molested by a gang of outsiders and some locals," a young woman, who fled the area along with four family members, told reporters.

Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly, Suvendu Adhikari, claimed that 400 people have fled Dhulian following the violence.

"More than 400 Hindus from Dhulian, Murshidabad driven by fear of religiously driven bigots were forced to flee across the river & take shelter at Par Lalpur High School, Deonapur-Sovapur GP, Baisnabnagar, Malda. Religious persecution in Bengal is real. Bengal is burning. The social fabric is torn," he said on X, sharing several disturbing images.

However, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghose and spokesperson Kunal Ghosh alleged that the BJP is flooding the internet with fake photos and fake videos of violence and arson, and passing them off as happening in West Bengal.

"This is BJP's campaign of lies, communal polarisation, and politics of incitement," she claimed. The photographs depicting violence are unrelated incidents that happened in various other places including Assam, Lucknow, Jalandhar and Karnataka, Kunal Ghosh claimed.

Meanwhile, 12 more people were arrested in connection with the violence, bringing the total to 150.

No new incident of violence was reported.

Prohibitory orders under section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) have been imposed in the violence-hit areas, and the internet has been suspended.

At least three people were killed and several others injured in the violence. — *PTI*

BSF personnel interact with locals as they guard in a violence-hit area at Jangipur, in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, on Sunday. Violence erupted in the area following protests over Waqf Amendment **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP MP writes to Shah seeking AFSPA

Kolakata, 13 April

BJP MP from Purulia Jyotirmay Singh Mahato has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging the imposition of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, and South 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal, citing a deteriorating security situation and alleging targeted violence against the Hindu community. Mahato requested that the regions be declared 'disturbed areas' under AFSPA. —*ANI*

Jyotirmay Singh Mahato **PHOTO: ANI**

AIMPLB to hold meet in Hyd on 19 Apr

Hyderabad, 13 April

All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) will conduct a protest meeting against the Waqf (Amendment) Act in Hyderabad on 19 April, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi said on Sunday. The meeting will be held at AIMIM's headquarters, Owaisi told reporters. Members of the Muslim Personal Law Board from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh along with other Muslim organisations from both the states will take part in this protest meeting, the Hyderabad MP said. —*ANI*

Asaduddin Owaisi **PHOTO: PTI**

"What Jinnah was doing is being done by Mamata Banerjee. Today, her image has been established as a modern Jinnah, and her party is doing the work of the Muslim League...Today's incidents are like the actions of the Muslim League in the 1940

-Tarun Chugh, BJP leader

I urge everyone to maintain peace. We pray we all stay together like brothers

-Khalilur Rahaman, TMC MP

They (Waqf 'occupiers') have no papers, no revenue records and ever since the (Waqf) Amendment Bill was passed and action is being taken, violence is being instigated for it

-Yogi Adithyanath, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Security described Tahawwur Hussain Rana as a very religious man; the NIA aim to collect voice samples to probe his exact role **PHOTO: PTI**

Andhra Pradesh revives Amaravati dream

VIJAYAWADA, 13 APRIL

The Andhra Pradesh government has restarted the ambitious Rs 65,000 crore Amaravati project, aimed at developing the state's new capital along the banks of the Krishna River. Under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, work on the project has resumed after a five-year hiatus.

Envisioned as a 'people's capital', Amaravati is set to attract skilled migrants and industries from around the world.

The project, designed by UK firm Foster and Partners, spans 217.23 square kilometres and aspires to create 1.5 million jobs, accommodating a population of 3.5 million while targeting a GDP of USD 3,500 crores by 2050.

PHOTO: PTI

To finance the project, the Government of India has committed Rs 15,000 crore in assistance, with additional support from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. The first phase will provide essential infrastructure, including housing and educational facilities, with several prominent universities already operational. Plans also incorporate dedicated zones for healthcare, education, and various industries, to create a balanced urban ecosystem. —*PTI*

26/11 plotter Rana requests for Quran, pen, paper

BENGALURU, 13 APRIL

26/11 Mumbai attacks conspirator Tahawwur Hussain Rana, who has recently been extradited from the US, requested for a copy of the Quran, a pen and paper while in the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) custody.

Rana has been lodged in a highly secured cell inside the NIA's office in New Delhi since 11 April. He is being grilled by an NIA team about his exact role in the 2008 Mumbai serial attacks based on phone calls he had made to David Coleman Headley, who is lodged in a US prison for his role in the attacks that claimed 166 lives.

Complying with his request, officials have provided him with a copy of the Quran along with a pen and paper. However, he is being monitored to ensure that he does not harm himself using the pen.

Officials described Rana as a religious man, who offers Namaz five times a day in his cell.

Meanwhile, the probe agency may collect Rana's voice samples to match them with his call record. By matching his voice samples to call records, investigators will aim to ascertain whether he was directly giving instructions during the 2008 attacks.

The NIA also aims to understand the role of a man Rana met in Dubai before the siege.

His links with Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI and terror group LeT, are also being probed. —*Agencies*

SWORD RALLY

Members of Karni Sena participate in a Swabhiman 'sword' rally on the birth anniversary of Rajput king Rana Sanga, in Agra **PHOTO: ANI**

Cong: RTI amendment undermines transparency

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh strongly condemned a recent amendment to the Right to Information (RTI) Act that he claims undermines citizens' rights to information, urging IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to halt, review, and repeal the change. The controversy stems from Section 44 (3) of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act 2023, which Ramesh asserts prohibits sharing personal information under the RTI Act.

In a letter to Vaishnaw, Ramesh said that previous safeguards ensuring transparency for citizens have been eroded. He pointed out the deletion of a crucial proviso in Section 8(1) that equated citizens' rights to access information with that of legislators. Ramesh maintains this amendment could lead to excessive withholding of information. —*PTI*

'CAG must audit petrol policies'

New Delhi, 13 April

Accusing the government of "looting" people by increasing excise duty on petrol and diesel, the Congress on Sunday called for fixing accountability, demanding the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit how government policies benefited private companies.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that Indians are being looted by the Modi government.

Private oil companies are earning huge profits from refining and marketing, while the common man has to bear the brunt of the price rise, he alleged, —*PTI*

SP worker claims Karni Sena attacked him

VARANASI, 13 APRIL

A Samajwadi Party (SP) worker in Varanasi has alleged that he was attacked with a knife by Karni Sena members outside his home on Saturday. Harish Mishra claimed he was standing outside when he was suddenly assaulted. Locals intervened, caught two alleged attackers, and beat them before police arrived. One accused, Avinash Mishra, denied any political affiliation, stating he is a priest of Maa Karni. He claimed Harish had made a false statement against the deity and that they had only gone to question him. Police confirmed a clash between two groups in Sigra area, and three people have been detained. —*PTI*

Kanhaiya Kumar booked for 'abusing' PM, RSS

PATNA, 13 PRIL

The BJP on Sunday lodged a police complaint in Patna against Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar, accusing him of using abusive language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the RSS during a recent television interview. A delegation led by Danish Iqbal, the BJP's media in-charge for Bihar, submitted the complaint at Kotwali police station, urging authorities to register an FIR. Iqbal alleged that Kumar, whom he described as part of the 'tukde tukde gang', made offensive remarks about the Prime Minister and the RSS's ideology during the interview on 11 April. "The language he used is highly objectionable and unacceptable," Iqbal said. "We are confident that the police will take appropriate action." The incident has added to rising political tensions ahead of the upcoming elections. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Pawan Kalyan brings son back after Singapore fire

AMARAVATI, 13 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Sunday said his son, Mark Shankar, who recently survived a fire accident at a summer camp in Singapore, is now stable and recovering. In a message of gratitude, the Janasena party chief expressed appreciation for the overwhelming support received during the crisis. "My son Shankar is stable and recovering well after the unfortunate incident in Singapore, and I sincerely thank everyone who reached out with their prayers, concern, and support," Kalyan said in on X. Kalyan's brother Chiranjeevi said Shankar had returned home and wished him a speedy recovery. Shankar sustained injuries in a school fire incident in Singapore that tragically claimed the life of one child. —*PTI*

Himanta meets Adani for talks on Rs 50,000 cr deal

GUWAHATI, 13 APRIL

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma met with Jeet Adani, Director of the Adani Group, on Sunday to discuss Rs 50,000 crore investment commitment made by the conglomerate during the state's business summit in February. Sarma expressed optimism that the proposals for investments in various sectors would soon come to fruition. He stated, "During #AdvantageAssam2, the Adani Group committed to an investment of Rs 50,000 crore. Today, along with my senior officers, we had an in-depth meeting with Mr Jeet Adani and his team to operationalise this commitment." The investments are expected to cover an aerocity, hotels, a cement plant, and key infrastructure projects. Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani had announced the investment plans during the summit. —*PTI*

'ARROGANCE AND DEFIANCE'

TN Guv Ravi makes students chant 'Jai Shri Ram', sparks row

CHENNAI, 13 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi's reported remarks asking students of a college to chant "Jai Shri Ram" has triggered a controversy with SPCSS-TN, a body of educationists, alleging he violated his oath of office and secular principles and urged President Droupadi Murmu to remove him from his post.

The State Platform for Common School System-Tamil Nadu (SPCSS-TN), said Ravi failed to abide by the Constitution, respect its ideals and institutions.

"Ravi should be removed from the office of Governor of Tamil Nadu forthwith for deliberately violating Article 159 (oath by governor) of the Constitution of India," SPCSS-TN General Secretary, PB Prince Gajendra Babu, said in a statement.

Ravi was invited by a government-aided college in Madurai as chief guest to distribute prizes to the winners in a literary contest. Delivering his address on 12 April, he had asked the students to chant "Jai Shri Ram" thrice.

PHOTO: PTI

Gajendra Babu alleged: "Ravi is illiterate as far as his knowledge of the curriculum and syllabus followed in schools and colleges in Tamil Nadu. Due to his ignorance and arrogance, he continues to propagate wrong ideas that in effect aim to disturb peace and instigate a group of people against another."

The Congress meanwhile said that Ravi was speaking the language of the BJP-RSS.

Congress MLA JMH Hassan Maulaana said that such remarks did not behove the constitutional post occupied by Ravi.

"The Governor is occupying one of the highest posts in the country but he is speaking like a religious leader... He has become a propaganda master of the RSS and the BJP. See, this is not the way the Governor can act," the Velachery MLA told ANI.

Congress MP (Tiruvallur) Sasikanth Senthil said in a post on X, "After being slammed by the Supreme Court and blocked by the State Government, he's now resorting to stunts like making students chant 'Jai Shri Ram' just to irritate the system. Clearly frustrated, he's sending a message that "Even if the courts rule against me, I will find other ways to push my agenda." It's a dangerous mix of arrogance and defiance!" —*PTI/ANI*

National Herald case assault on democracy: Sibal

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Sunday accused the government of using probe agencies to "paralyse" the Congress and described the development of the Enforcement Directorate issuing notices to take possession of immovable assets in the National Herald case as an "assault on democracy".

"In lip service, we are the mother of democracy but in reality you are the father of dictatorship. They (BJP) want to do their politics on Hindu-Muslim agenda and finish off the opposition," Sibal said in a press conference.

His remarks come a day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) stated it has served notices to take possession of immovable assets worth Rs 661 crore that it had attached as part of a money laundering probe linked to Congress-controlled National Herald newspaper and the Associated Journals Limited (AJL). —*PTI*

Parl panel recommends revamp of MGNREGS

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

A Parliamentary panel suggested revamping the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in view of emerging challenges. It stressed that an independent survey should be held to assess the scheme's effectiveness.

In a report tabled in Parliament during the last week of the recently concluded Budget Session, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj recommended increasing the number of days of work under the scheme to 150 from the current 100, and also suggested that wages be increased to at least Rs 400 per day.

"At least Rs 400 per day should be provided as wages, as the current rates are inadequate to meet even basic daily expenses," they said.

Saying that there are "chronic delays in wage payments" the report recommended an increase in compensation rate for delayed wage.

"The committee believes that a comprehensive national survey should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of MGNREGS," the panel headed by Congress MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, said.

It said the survey should focus on worker satisfaction, wage delays, participation trends and financial irregularities.

Noting the high number of job card deletions, the panel said in 2021-22 approximately 50.31 lakh job cards were deleted due to minor spelling errors or mismatches in Aadhaar details. Since then, the figures have not come down significantly and thousands of workers are being denied work. —*PTI*

Two earthquakes reported in India in 24 hours

SHIMLA, 13 APRIL

On Sunday morning, Southeast Asia experienced a series of earthquakes, two of them in India, raising concerns in the region's seismically active landscape. In Himachal Pradesh, A moderate-intensity earthquake, measuring 3.4 on the Richter scale, struck Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district at 9.18am on Sunday, officials said. The depth of the earthquake was 5 km. No loss of life and property was reported from any part of the state so far, officials said. A moderate intensity earthquake shook Jammu and Kashmir around 1pm on Saturday, an official said. The epicentre of the quake was in Pakistan. There were are no reports of loss of life or damage to property. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Man carrying 6.7kg gold arrested in Mumbai airport

MUMBAI, 13 APRIL

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has arrested a passenger at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport after seizing 6.7 kg of smuggled gold worth Rs 6.3 crore. The individual had arrived from Bangkok and was found to have concealed the gold bars in the shoes he was wearing. Acting on specific intelligence, DRI officers intercepted the passenger shortly after his arrival. During questioning, he revealed the identity of a prospective buyer involved in the smuggling operation. The second individual was subsequently arrested. Both are believed to be part of a wider gold smuggling syndicate. Investigations are ongoing to trace the full extent of the network and other possible accomplices. —*PTI*

Woman doctor found murdered at Nagpur home

NAGPUR, 13 APRIL

A 50-year-old woman doctor, Dr Archana Anil Rahule, was found murdered in her home in Ladikar Layout, Nagpur, on Saturday night. Police said she had suffered a serious head injury, and the body was discovered in a decomposed state, suggesting the murder occurred around three days earlier. Dr Rahule, an assistant professor in physiotherapy at Government Medical College and Hospital, lived alone. Her husband, Dr Anil Rahule, based in Raipur, found the body upon returning home and alerted authorities. Their son is a medical student in Pune. Hudkeshwar police are probing a possible robbery. —*PTI*

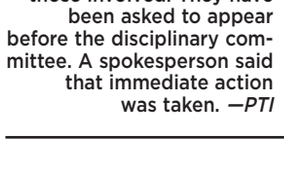

PHOTO: X

Suitcase incident a harmless prank: Jindal varsity

CHANDIGARH, 13 APRIL

A day after a viral video showed a girl emerging from a suitcase being wheeled around a hostel, OP Jindal Global University in Sonipat, Haryana, has called it a harmless prank among students. The incident occurred within the girls' hostel, where a group of students was reportedly playing a joke on a friend. The situation escalated when they entered a common corridor covered by CCTV, prompting security guards to investigate. The footage, showing the girl coming out of the suitcase, sparked widespread social media attention. The university stated it takes student safety seriously and has issued showcause notices to those involved. They have been asked to appear before the disciplinary committee. A spokesperson said that immediate action was taken. —*PTI*

Violence mars Hanuman Jayanthi in MP's Guna

Nine held after stone pelting triggered clash near a mosque in MP's Guna city; 13 injured

BHOPAL, 13 APRIL

Police have apprehended nine persons in connection with stone-pelting during a Hanuman Jayanti procession in Madhya Pradesh's Guna city, officials said on Sunday. At least 13 people were reportedly injured.

The incident took place at around 7.45pm on Saturday when the procession was passing by a mosque in Colonelganj. A confrontation reportedly ensued, following which the stone pelting began.

The situation was currently peaceful, the officials said.

"We have arrested nine men, including the prime accused Vicky Pathan, with the help of CCTV and mobile footages. We are identifying more people involved in the incident," Additional Superintendent of Police Man Singh Thakur told PTI. There was no permission to have a procession in that area, he added.

Normalcy has been restored in the locality, police said **PHOTO: PTI/X**

- Additional Superintendent of Police Man Singh Thakur said the authorities had not given permission to take out a procession in that area

Security has been tightened across the city with security forces from neighbouring districts being brought to ease the tensions, he said.

However, Ranjeet Khatik, one of the procession organisers said, "The administration is saying that there was no permission but I have all the proof of the permission. Stones were pelted when some boys raised slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram', while the other group, in retaliation, said 'Allahhu Akbar." —*PTI/Agencies*

The group arrived in a convoy of around 10 vehicles **PHOTO: X**

THUGS ASSAULTS PRIEST IN MP TEMPLE

DEWAS, 13 APRIL

A group of individuals forcibly entered the renowned Mata Tekri temple at Dewas in Madhya Pradesh on Friday night and allegedly assaulted the priest for refusing to let them in. The police reported that the group, reportedly including Jitu Raghuvanshi – who has a criminal background – arrived in a convoy of eight to ten vehicles, some of which had red beacons.

The priest lodged a complaint at the Kotwali police station, stating that he was beaten when he denied access to the temple after hours. An FIR has since been registered, and police are examining footage from 50 CCTV cameras to identify the assailants.

The Congress party has alleged that the son of BJP MLA Golu Shukla was involved, prompting sharp political responses. Congress chief Jitu Patwari accused the ruling party of enabling "the arrogance of power," while BJP spokesman Pankaj Chaturvedi dismissed the claims, maintaining that the allegations against the MLA's son were unfounded. He assured that legal action would be taken against those responsible for the incident.

The incident has raised concerns over the conduct of individuals affiliated with political leaders. —*PTI*

Sambhal DM orders probe into Waqf land irregularities

SAMBHAL, 12 APRIL

The Sambhal district administration has ordered a probe into alleged financial irregularities related to Dada Mouazmiya Shah dargah and encroachment of land, officials said on Saturday. Officials said the probe will focus not just on the financial irregularities, but also whether the land was Waqf property as claimed.

According to the complainant, the dargah was being illegally occupied by one Shahid Mian. He was also operating an unauthorized medical clinic on the encroached land, the complainant Javed said. The Waqf land has been without a 'mutawalli' (caretaker) since 2019 and remains vacant but Shahid allegedly was earning a "substantial income from the annual Urs festival held at the dargah, the complaint alleged. —*PTI*

Illegal borewells are a sin, says Delhi High Court

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

The Delhi High Court has condemned the extraction of water through illegal borewells, likening the act to a "sin," and has called for stringent deterrents against those responsible. The court voiced concerns that if the trend of illegal borewells continues, Delhi could face a water crisis similar to Johannesburg, which suffered significant water shortages several years ago.

The remarks came from Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela during a hearing related to illegal borewells at a construction site on Goenka Road in the Roshanara area. Petitioner Sunil Kumar Sharma, an advocate, highlighted discrepancies in responses from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the local Sub-Divisional Magistrate regarding the number of borewells present.

The bench ordered a joint inspection of the site by senior officials from the MCD, the Delhi Jal Board, and local police, mandating that the survey be conducted within ten days. The court emphasised the need for a report detailing any operational illegal borewells. —*PTI*

Rape, murder accused found dead in Mumbai jail

THANE, 13 APRIL

A man accused of raping and murdering a minor girl in Kalyan town allegedly committed suicide at the Taloja Central Jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai early on Sunday, police said.

The accused, Vishal Gawli, 35, was found hanging using a towel in the prison toilet at around 3.30am, they said. The prison authorities later found the body, an official from Kharghar police station said.

Vishal Gawli **PHOTO: PTI**

Gawli was accused of raping and murdering a 12-year-old girl in Kalyan area of Maharashtra's Thane district in December 2024. The incident had sparked widespread outrage and demands for swift and stringent punishment for the perpetrators.

The child went missing from Kolsewadi locality on 24 December, and the body was found later at Bapgaon village in Padgha, officials said.

A probe by Kolsewadi police led to the arrest of Gawli and his wife Sakshi on charges of kidnapping for ransom, rape, murder, causing disappearance of evidence and other offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

Gawli's lawyer Sanjay Dhakane said, "Vishal's family believes he didn't commit suicide. We had requested security for Vishal, knowing his life was in danger. A detailed inquiry into his death is necessary," he said.

Vishal Gawli raped and murdered the girl, while Sakshi helped him dump the body in Bapgaon, police said. —*PTI*

8 held for raping 13-yr-old girl in Sikkim for a year

GANGTOK, 13 APRIL

Eight people, including four boys, were apprehended for allegedly raping a 13-year-old girl for months in Sikkim's Gyalshing district, police said on Sunday. The action was taken on the basis of a complaint filed by the Child Welfare Committee on Friday after the girl's school alerted them about her condition.

During counselling, the girl named a woman from her locality who would regularly call her to assist with domestic work. The woman allegedly coerced her into having sexual acts with her husband, police said. It was also revealed that two other men were brought in and the girl was allegedly raped by them "in exchange for money", they said.

The survivor also named four boys who allegedly sexually assaulted her during the past one year.

The school had become suspicious as the girl was constantly sick and her academic performance was affected. She is currently with the Child Welfare Committee and receiving counselling and medical treatment. —*PTI*

21-yr-old man held for raping, killing girl in Manipur; 3rd case in a month

Imphal, 13 April

A 21-year-old man was arrested in connection with the rape and murder of a girl in Manipur's Churachandpur district, police said on Sunday. The girl's body was found in a forest in Thanlon sub-division on Friday. "The girl had gone to the forest to collect firewood. As she did not return, her father went to the forest looking for her. He found her body with clothes torn and injury marks," an officer said. The accused was arrested from Khoken village in the district. This is the third case of rape of a minor in Churachandpur district in less than a month. Earlier this month, a 10-year-old girl was sexually assaulted by an underage boy. Last month, a nine-year-old girl was found dead in the vicinity of a relief camp. —*PTI*

IPS officer booked for 'raping' doctor promising marriage

Nagpur, 13 April

Police have registered a case against a 30-year-old IPS officer for allegedly "raping" a woman doctor in Maharashtra's Nagpur after promising to marry her, officials said on Sunday. According to the complaint filed on Friday, the 28-year-old woman and the man became friends in November 2022. The accused was then preparing for the UPSC exams, while the woman was studying MBBS. Later, the accused promised to marry he and they got into a physical relationship. However, after being selected for the IPS, the accused started avoiding the woman and refused to marry her, police said. —*PTI*

SC dismisses adoption deed, cites procedural lapses

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

The Supreme Court has declined to intervene in a ruling by the Allahabad High Court that annulled the adoption deed of a man involved in a property dispute, labelling it a strategic attempt to deny rightful inheritance to the deceased's daughters.

The high court, which expressed regret over a 40-year delay in assessing the adoption's validity, highlighted the absence of the mandatory requirement for spousal consent in adoption proceedings. Petitioner Ashok Kumar had claimed he was adopted by the late Bhuneshwar Singh from his biological father, presenting a photograph as evidence. Kumar sought a share in Singh's estate.

The bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh, upheld the high court's 11 December, 2024 decision, affirming that the adoption deed lacked legal standing due to procedural errors. —*PTI*

ROBO-SURGENS

Made-in-India robotic surgery machine Medi JARVIS, which will be inaugurated at the State Cancer Institute in Guwahati on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Eight killed in Andhra firecracker factory mishap

VISAKHAPATNAM, 13 APRIL

A devastating fire at a firecracker manufacturing unit in Anakapalli district, Andhra Pradesh, resulted in the deaths of eight individuals, including two women, and left seven others injured on Sunday. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu, expressed his shock at the tragic incident.

Home Minister V Anitha confirmed the fatalities and indicated that the injured victims are being transferred to hospitals for treatment, with further details pending.

The CM has instructed Anitha and local officials to ensure that the injured receive the best possible medical care. An official statement underscored the government's commitment to addressing the situation and supporting those affected by the incident. —*PTI*

SANCTITY AFFECTED

Dress code wave hits temples in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 13 APRIL

Temples across Maharashtra are gradually adopting dress codes for visitors, as trusts managing these places of worship have issued guidelines urging devotees to wear modest, traditional clothing. While temple trusts have emphasised that dress codes are needed to maintain the sanctity of religious places, visitors have had mixed reactions to the development.

Temples managed by the Chinchwad Devasthan Trust, including those at Morgaon and Theur in Pune district, Siddhatek in Ahilyanagar and the Morya Gosavi Sanjivan in Pimpri Chinchwad and Khar Narangi in Raigad, on Friday, issued advisories requesting visitors to wear "appropriate" attire.

The latest advisory appears to be part of a trend gradually emerging across the state.

Aditi Kane, a resident of Pune, said, "These days, people don't plan ahead to visit temples but club them with their holidays to certain destinations. I have visited temples while holidaying and observed that barring a handful of visitors, most people wear decent attires. There is nothing wrong with temple managements expressing their expectations about dress codes, but they should not enforce it."

In January this year, Mumbai-based Shree Siddhivinayak Ganpati Temple Trust announced a dress code for the prominent temple that sees thousands of visitors, including celebrities. Last year, dress codes were introduced for visitors at 50 temples in Ratnagiri, with signboards at entrances urging people to be fully clothed and avoid garments that exposed body parts.

At least 16 temples have introduced similar restrictions in Ahilyanagar district and have barred entry to visitors wearing jeans, skirts, shorts, or other "revealing" clothing. —*PTI*

Temples managed by the Chinchwad Devasthan Trust on Friday issued advisories, requesting visitors to wear "appropriate" attire **PHOTO: PTI**

Devotees break age old custom, enter Kerala temple

KASARAGOD, 13 APRIL

In a significant move against age-old customs, a group of devotees entered the inner courtyard of the Bhagawati temple at Rayaramangalam in Kerala's Kasaragod district on Sunday. This action was part of a protest organised by an action committee opposing the longstanding restrictions governing entry to the temple.

Leaders of the committee claimed that certain groups of people had been unjustly barred from accessing the temple courtyard due to these restrictions.

They stated that their grievances had been communicated to both the Devaswom authorities and the relevant minister.

During last month's temple festival, discussions were held with the temple's tantri, who asserted that he could not permit deviations from the established customs. Raghavan Kulangara, leader of 'Samskara Sahithy', clarified that the issue was not about caste but about the unnecessary limitations imposed on worshippers. He noted that entry to the temple is restricted to specific times for various sections of the community, and expressed that the tantri acknowledged the possibility for devotees to enter the courtyard without his explicit permission. —*PTI*

STARRY NIGHT

The International Space Station (ISS) posted a series of breathtaking Earth images on X, including a view of India aglow under a starlit sky. The post featured photos of the Midwest US, India, Southeast Asia, and Canada, captioned: "When you can see the stars above, the city lights below..." India's image stood out for its dense clusters of city lights

PHOTO: X @SPACE_STATION

Agromet workers battle against climate chaos

In January last year, the government decided to shut down 199 District Agrometeorological Units (DAMUs), which provided farmers with crop and location-specific advice, even though these centres were meant to operate until at least 2026 under a pilot project.

Despite this, around 130 employees chose to stay on -- unpaid but unwavering -- because farmers still depended on them and they had two years of service left.They went to court, secured a stay and kept working, helping farmers navigate worsening weather and rising climate risks.

On 31 March1 this year, their salaries were finally released following court intervention. But no paycheck can undo a year lived without medicine, without school fees, without peace of mind. One DAMU employee from Rajasthan, requesting anonymity, said he could not pay his daughter's school fees and had to fold his hands before school authorities. "I kept my head down, but inside, I was breaking," he said. His voice quivered as he recalled how his family had to cut back on food.

"We stopped buying tomatoes or onions when prices shot up. Sometimes, we skipped vegetables altogether. We survived on lentils and rice. My children would ask, 'Why don't we eat like we used to?' How do I explain that we just do not have the money?" At times, he felt so hopeless he considered switching to a lower-paying job, just to earn something.

Another DAMU staffer from Rajasthan, who is soon to become a father for a second time, told PTI his family has been surviving on the kindness of others. "Every month, I tell my landlord the same thing: 'Abhi salary nahi aayi hai'," he said, his tone conveying more than his words. He spoke about the pain of watching his loved ones let go of life's little joys. "I want to take my family out for a meal or buy something nice for my child. But I cannot. I feel helpless." "When someone in the family gets sick, I just pray it's not serious. Because we simply do not have the money for treatment," he said.

Many of these DAMU staff hold advanced degrees in agrometeorology, agriculture and climate science

PHOTO: PTI

In Uttar Pradesh, one DAMU observer allegedly lost his mother to illness. His colleagues say he could not "arrange timely care because he had not been paid in months". PTI could not speak directly to the staffer, but it mirrors the pain many DAMU staff describe -- a silent capitulation under the weight of neglect. In Maharashtra, another staffer received repeated notices from the bank after defaulting on his home loan. "My daughter would show me messages from her school's WhatsApp group -- other parents sharing fee receipts. I had nothing to show. I felt like I failed her." From Madhya Pradesh, a DAMU employee said he delayed buying crucial medicine for a chronic condition.

"I bought it on 31 March, the day my salary came in. That was the first thing I did." Now in his mid-thirties, he says he feels stuck. He is too qualified for some jobs, not qualified enough for others. "Private companies want different skill sets. And at this age, getting a secure government job is like winning a lottery."

What keeps him going though? "When farmers say, 'because of you, we did not lose our harvest'. That means everything." One DAMU employee from Uttar Pradesh was miles away when his father passed away. "I could not get leave. By the time I reached home, he was already cremated. That's a pain I will carry forever. I did my job with devotion. What did I get?"

Mahesh Yadulwar, a DAMU employee from Maharashtra, said salary delays were nothing new. "When I joined, we got regular salaries for three-four months. Then the delays began. During the Covid period, we worked without pay for over a year." He paused before adding, "We suffered quietly so that farmers do not." "I never say no to a farmer. If they call me to their fields, I go, even if it means hopping onto a tractor or squeezing into a crowded bus. I cannot afford fuel, but I cannot let them down either," said a DAMU staffer from Uttar Pradesh.

Many of these DAMU staff hold advanced degrees in agrometeorology, agriculture and climate science. Some have published research papers, taught at colleges and even written books. They left academic or private paths to serve on the ground, to help farmers adapt to changing weather and rising climate risks.

Most are now in their late thirties or forties. Many say they are too old to restart. "We served the system with heart. Now, the same system acts like we never existed," said a staffer. But even when institutions turned away, farmers did not.

—PTI

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

Babasaheb was a caring man, recalls centenarian

AMBEDKAR JAYANTHI

"I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity.

Political tyranny is nothing compared to social tyranny and a reformer, who defies society is a more courageous man than a politician who defies government

So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you.

Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering otherwise both will wither and die.

—DR BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

As the country gears up to celebrate Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary, a centenarian from Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar who once gave up a steady job with the railways to briefly serve the Dalit leader, shares how that experience continues to define his life.

Despite age catching up on him, 103-year-old Laxman Khotkar still remembers, with vivid detail, the six to seven years he spent serving the architect of the Constitution in newly independent India.

In 1948, Khotkar was employed as a gate watchman with Nizam's State Railways when he got an opportunity to work at the Subhedari Circuit Guest House, where Ambedkar stayed intermittently during the construction of Milind College, which he founded in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

"I was posted with the Railways in Shernapur (a railway gate north of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar). I found out that Babasaheb was building a college, and I left the railway job in a heartbeat and came to the college site, requesting the contractor, Appasaheb Gaikwad and one Mr Warale to hire me," he says.

Khotkar says he took on the job of a watchman and handyman for Rs 1.5 per day just out of his love and admiration for Ambedkar.

"I earned Rs 15 per month in my railway job. However, I was paid Rs 1.5 a day at the college. There was no guarantee of work every day, and the income wasn't steady. My family was small, and in those days, 16 kg of jowar cost Rs 1, which was enough for us," he says.

Khotkar says he took care of Ambedkar's daily routine and needs during his visits to the city.

"I would be informed of Babasaheb's visits beforehand and would take care of everything for him during his stay," he says with pride.

Ambedkar was a considerate and caring man, Khotkar says.

"Babasaheb would always ask us if we had had our meals and even asked his driver Maruti and me to have breakfast with him," he says.

Khotkar recalls that Ambedkar was a workaholic and would work late into the night and be up by 5 am.

"Once, I left for duty at the guesthouse without having my meal. My wife arrived at the gate carrying my infant son and waited for me patiently with food. Babasaheb spotted her and jokingly asked if she thought her husband would be starved at work," Khotkar says, talking about an incident still fresh in his memory.

Ambedkar then gave blessings to Khotkar's six-month-old son.

Khotkar continues to live near Milind College, celebrating memories he has of one of the most revered personalities in the country.

—PTI

The country gears up to celebrate Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary ***PHOTO: PTI***

Amid tariff war with US, Chinese businesses weigh next steps

When the first two rounds of 10 per cent tariffs hit, Zou Guoqing, a Chinese exporter, groaned but didn't find the barriers insurmountable. He gave up some of his profits and offered his client, a snow-bike factory in Nebraska, price cuts ranging from five per cent to 10 per cent. It seemed to work: The factory agreed to a new order of molds and parts.

But when President Donald Trump announced an additional 34 per cent universal tariff on Chinese goods on 2 April, Zou, who's been exporting to the US for more than a decade, was incredulous. "There's not a thread of feasibility," said Zou, who does business in the eastern Chinese city of Ningbo. "It looks like I would have no choice but give up trading with the US."

Then came 50 per cent more from Trump, followed by another hike — pushing the universal tariff on Chinese goods to the sky-high 145 per cent, and Zou said he now could only hope that the two leaders can communicate. "We are pausing the shipments," he said, "until the leaders talk."

The 145 per cent tariff from the United States and the retaliatory 125 per cent tariff from China are putting businesses doing trade between the US and China on edge. They're fretting not only about their next orders, but also the viability of their business if there's no quick relief. Experts are worried the decades-long trade ties that have underpinned the relationship between the world's two largest economies could be unraveling.

By last year, China-US trade was USD 582 billion, but tensions have flared over China's widening trade imbalance with the US that led to the first tariff skirmish during the first Trump term

PHOTO: FREEPIK

If the high tariff is sustained for the next six months or longer, "that would actually lead to a real effective decoupling between the American and Chinese economies," said Chen Zhiwu, professor of finance at Hong Kong University Business School.

Josh Lipsky, senior director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center, said the sky-high tariff, if kept in place, amounts to "almost a trade embargo," making it impossible for China to export low-value items such as apparel to US.

It also would force US businesses to source elsewhere, away from China, if there should be alternatives, he said. In China, the central tariff office flat-out declared there was "no possibility for market acceptance" of US goods exported to China" at the current tariff level.

"Everyone's pretty worried," said Hu Jianlong, founder of Brands Factory, a consultancy that works with Chinese companies trying to break into overseas markets.

"At this point in time, there's no good way forward. This situation has not resolved ... there's no final number. And so everyone's still waiting to see how this will develop."

The high-stakes tariff war has come more than 20 years after China — with the help of the United States — joined the World Trade Organization and began to see its economy soar on luring foreign investments and exporting to the US and other Western markets.

By last year, China-US trade was USD 582 billion, but tensions have flared over China's widening trade imbalance with the US that led to the first tariff skirmish during the first Trump term.

The trade deficit has since narrowed but stayed stubbornly high, at a time when the US and other Western markets have also grown concerned about another onslaught of Chinese products such as electric vehicles. During his four-year term, former President Joe Biden stressed that the US was not trying to decouple from China but to "de-risk."

He took the "small-yard, high-fence" approach, under which his administration put up barriers in targeted sectors such as advanced chips, artificial intelligence and quantum computing that have national security implications.

Now, Trump is declaring universal tariffs on all Chinese goods but has said he's also willing to talk with Beijing. It remains unclear what his goals might be.

"What are they looking for in those negotiations? How much is it possible to reduce these tariffs? What are the other demands apart from China removing its retaliatory tariffs that the United States wants to put forward. We don't know what that would be," said Greta Peisch, who served as the general counsel for the Office of the US Trade Representative in 2021-2024.

The message from China's leadership is loud and clear. It will talk only when the U.S. stops "maximum pressure and capricious and destructive behavior," said Lin Jian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Six die as plane crashes into field in New York

COPAKE, 13 APRIL

A twin-engine plane crashed into a muddy field in upstate New York onSaturday, killing six persons. The Columbia County Sheriff's Office responded to a 911 report around noon. Police said the crash was fatal, but declined to reveal how many people died. The Federal Aviation Administration said the Mitsubishi MU-2B with six people on board, was headed to Columbia County Airport near Hudson on 12 April, but crashed about 48km away near Copake. "It's in the middle of a field and it's pretty muddy, so accessibility is difficult," Salvatore said while briefing the media near the scene about 80km south of Albany. The National Transportation Safety Board said it is investigating the mishap. *—PTI*

Central Myanmar shaken by 5.5 magnitude quake

BANGKOK, 13 APRIL

A magnitude 5.5 earthquake struck on Sunday morning near Meiktila city in central Myanmar, the US Geological Survey stated. The quake occurred as relief efforts are underway following a massive 7.7 magnitude temblor that had hit the country's central region on 28 March, killing 3,649 and injuring 5,018. No major damage or casualty was reported in the quake, one of the strongest of hundreds of aftershocks from the temblor. Myanmar's Meteorological Department said Sunday's quake shook Wundwin township. The US Geological Survey estimated the depth at 7.7 km. The UN had warned that damage caused by the previous quake would worsen the existing humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, with agricultural production disrupted and a potential health emergency. *—PTI*

Coup leader's victory likely in Gabon prez poll

LIBREVILLE, 13 APRIL

Voters in Gabon on Sunday awaited the results of the central African nation's presidential election, which the country's military rulers hope will legitimise their grip on power after they staged a coup in 2023. The interim president Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, who led the coup against former president Ali Bongo Ondimba, looked set to win the election held on 12 April, by a wide margin. He had most of the votes so far collated in the voting stations that have announced results. Seven other candidates, including former prime minister Alain Claude Bilie-By-Nze, are in the race. The election is crucial for Gabon, where a third of its 2.3 million people live in poverty. *—PTI*

Pakistan: Bilawal Bhutto re-elected as PPP chairman

ISLAMABAD, 13 APRIL

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has been re-elected as chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for the next four years during the intra-party elections held at the Central Secretariat in Islamabad. Humayun Khan was chosen as PPP's secretary general, adeem Afzal Chan as secretary of information and Aamna Piracha as secretary finance. While addressing a PPP rally in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on the anniversary of Pakistan's former president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's execution, Zardari said that the PPP had always fought for peoples' rights to water. The party rejected the government's canal project, terming it "unilateral" and warning that it would harm farmers in Punjab. On February 15, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir inaugurated the Cholistan project. *—PTI*

Israel destroys part of Gaza's last hospital

Patients, staff evacuated as attacks intensify

DEIR AL-BALAH, 13 APRIL

Israel struck the last fully functional hospital in northern Gaza early Sunday, forcing patients to evacuate as attacks intensified across the Strip. The pre-dawn strike hit Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, after Israel issued an evacuation warning, according to Gaza's ministry of health. One patient died during the evacuation because medical staff were unable to provide urgent care, it said. The health ministry said the strike destroyed the ward for outpatients and laboratories and damaged the emergency ward.

The hospital, run by the Diocese of Jerusalem, was attacked on Palm Sunday, which commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Hours later, a separate strike on a car in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, killed at least seven people, according to staff at the morgue of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies.

The outpatient section and laboratory of the Al-Ahli Arab Baptist hospital was destroyed in the Israeli strike on Saturday night *PHOTO: PTI*

Israel said it struck a command and control centre used by Hamas at the hospital to plan and execute attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers.

It said that prior to the strike, steps were taken to mitigate harm, including issuing warnings, and using precise munitions and aerial surveillance.

The strikes came hours after Israel's defense minister said that military activity would rapidly expand across Gaza and that people would have to evacuate from "fighting zones." *—PTI*

Trump's tariffs major test for Xi's leadership: Burns

BEIJING, 13 APRIL

The US' high tariffs on China will be a major test for President Xi Jinping's leadership amid the economic slowdown while the Trump administration's levies on Beijing could be far more effective if the US takes allies along, former US ambassador to China Nicholas Burns has said.

"The tariff war with the US will be a major test for Xi Jinping simply because the Chinese economy has not performed well in the last few years. Their GDP growth rate is slowing down," Burns told BBC on Friday. "I don't think the Chinese government wants to have a sustained trade war. They want to get a trade deal with the United States," said Burns, who was appointed by former US president Joe Biden and served as American Ambassador to Beijing from 2022 to early this year.

China is the only country to have retaliated with tit-for-tat levy when US President Donald Trump slapped 145 per cent tariffs against Chinese exports.

Midway through his tariff campaign against a number of countries, Trump paused the additional duties on other nations for 90 days while imposing more punitive levies on China leaving Beijing to wage a lonely battle to defend its interests.

I don't think the Chinese government wants to have a sustained trade war. They want to get a trade deal with the United States

—Nicholas Burns

"So, the way to battle the Chinese effectively, I certainly found as ambassador in Beijing is to get your allies on your side with us. Because the Chinese cannot match that. Instead, the US has put stratospherically high tariffs on those allies depriving us of that unique advantage," he said, referring to Trump's imposition of tariffs on a host of countries. *—PTI*

Fund cut shuts Arabic news channel

Cairo, 12 April

The head of a US-funded Arabic-language television and online news outlet that claims a 30M strong audience in the Middle East and North Africa terminated most of its staff on Saturday and went off air, accusing the Trump administration of having "irresponsibly and unlawfully" cut off funding. In notices to its staffers, Al Hurra news chief Jeffrey Gedmin said he had given up on the US administration lifting the freeze anytime soon. He also accused Kari Lake, Trump's appointee to the agency overseeing Al Hurra, Voice of America and other US-funded news programming abroad, of dodging his efforts to speak with her. *—PTI*

Trump receives standing ovation at UFC event in Miami

Miami, 13 April

President Donald Trump entered to a standing ovation and cheers from a crowd of thousands attending a UFC event on Saturday night, shaking hands with supporters against a backdrop of fans waving his trademark MAGA hats. He also danced to the Village People's "YMCA" standing from his seat, firing up the crowd as they chanted "USA". He was accompanied by UFC President and his close friend Dana White, and his granddaughter Kai Trump. Elon Musk, billionaire and chief of the Department of Government Efficiency was with Trump, who pumped his fist in the air, prompting cheers to strains of "Taking Care of Business". *—PTI*

President Donald Trump with Elon Musk and his son at the UFC event *PHOTO: PTI*

2-day attack kills over 100 in Sudanese camps

CAIRO, 12 APRIL

Sudan's notorious paramilitary group launched a two-day attack on famine-hit camps forcing more than 2400 people to flee the camps leaving more than 100 dead, including 20 children and nine aid workers, in the Darfur region, a UN official said Saturday.

Sudan's Doctors' Union said in a statement that six medical workers with the Relief International were killed when their hospital in Zamzam came under attack on Friday. They include Dr. Mahmoud Babaker Idris, a physician at the hospital, and Adam Babaker Abdallah, head of the group in the region, the union said. It blamed the RSF for "this criminal and barbaric act."

The Rapid Support Forces and allied militias launched an offensive on the Zamzam and Abu Shorouk camps and the nearby city of el-Fasher, the provincial capital of North Darfur province, on Friday, said UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan Clementine Nkweta-Salami.

El-Fasher is under the control of the military, which has fought the RSF since Sudan already reeling under extreme poverty, descended into civil war two years ago, killing more than than 24,000 people, according to the United Nations, though activists say the number is likely far higher.

Initial estimates indicated that 150 people were killed in the attack *PHOTO: X*

The camps were attacked again on Saturday. This represents yet another deadly and unacceptable escalation in a series of brutal attacks on displaced people and aid workers in Sudan since the onset of this conflict nearly two years ago," Nkweta-Salami said in a statement. *—PTI*

Executions part of Islam, says Taliban leader

KABUL, 13 APRIL

Days after four men were shot dead in Afghanistan after they were convicted of murder, a Taliban leader said executions were part of Islam.

The executions took place in sports stadiums on Friday, the highest number known to have been carried out in one day since the Taliban returned to power in 2021. Rights groups and the UN condemned the killings.

Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has previously rejected the need for Western laws in Afghanistan.

In an audio clip released on Sunday by the Taliban's chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid on X, Akhundzada said, "We must carry out disciplinary measures besides performing prayers and acts of worship. We must enter Islam completely. Islam is not just limited to a few rituals – it is a comprehensive system of all divine commands."

Not a single command of Islam should be left unfulfilled, said.

God had commanded people to pray and to enforce his punishments, said Akhundzada, adding that the Taliban did not wage war for power or wealth but rather to "implement Islamic law". *—PTI*

Russian missiles kill 32 in Ukraine city

Ukrainian Emergency Service personnel carry the body of a victim in Sumy city on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

KYIV, 13 APRIL

At least 32 people have been killed and 99 injured in a Russian missile strike on the Ukrainian city of Sumy on Sunday, its acting mayor and Ukraine's General Prosecutor's Office said.

Two ballistic missiles struck the heart of the city at around 10:15 am as people gathered to celebrate Palm Sunday, according to officials. Videos posted from the scene on official channels showed bodies on the ground amid debris and smoke around central Sumy.

The attack comes amidst US envoy Steve Witkoff meeting on Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss peace prospects.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed that rescue efforts were ongoing and said "dozens" had been killed in the double missile attack. "According to preliminary information, dozens of civilians were killed and wounded. Only filthy scum can act like this taking the lives of ordinary people," he said.

Zelenskyy also called for a global response to the attack. "Talks have never stopped ballistic missiles and aerial bombs. What's needed is an attitude toward Russia that a terrorist deserves," he said.

The strike comes less than a day after Russia and Ukraine's top diplomats accused each other of violating a tentative US-brokered deal to pause strikes on energy infrastructure. *—PTI*

Bangladesh court orders arrest of Hasina, aides

DHAKA, 13 APRIL

A court in Bangladesh issued arrest warrants on Sunday against ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana, British MP Tulip Rizwana Siddiq, and 50 others in connection with alleged land acquisition using abuse of political power.

Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge Zakir Hossain passed the order after reviewing three chargesheets submitted by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), according to the Dhaka Tribune. The court set 27 April to review progress on executing the warrants, said ACC Assistant Director (Prosecution) Aminul Islam.

The ACC filed three separate corruption cases involving irregularities in plot allocations in Purbachal New Town. All 53 accused were shown as absconding, prompting the court to issue the warrants.

Hasina's daughter, Saima Wazed Putul, currently WHO's South East Asia regional director, was also named in a separate plot-related case filed on 10 April, along with 17 others.

One case involves Rehana allegedly acquiring a 10-katha plot without holding office. Tulip Siddiq was named in two cases, while Rehana's son, Radwan Mujib Siddiq, was named in another. *—PTI*

Militants kill 8 Pak workers in Iran

ISLAMABAD, 13 APRIL

Eight workers from Pakistan's Punjab province were killed by Baloch militants in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province in an incident of target killing, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The Iranian authorities confirmed the killing of the Pakistani nationals, saying that the victims hailed from Bahawalpur and worked at a car repair shop.

Reports said armed men barged into the workshop in the night and tied the men's hands and feet and shot them dead before fleeing. The Iranian police rushed to the area after receiving information about the incident.

The banned Balochistan National Army has claimed responsibility for the killing *PHOTO: X*

A spokesman for the banned Balochistan National Army, in a statement to the media, claimed responsibility for the killing. Iranian authorities have said that their police were investigating the incident. It was the second such incident in the Sistan Baluchestan. In January of last year, armed men killed nine Pakistanis in Saravan city who were also working in Iran as motor mechanics and staying at a workshop.

Local groups in Pakistan and Iran are part of a decades-long struggle for greater autonomy in Balochistan. Last year in January, Iran attacked Pakistan. Pakistan retaliated with a missile strike inside Iranian territory, escalating border tensions.

Pakistan's Balochistan has long grappled with insurgency and unrest. Locals, particularly the Balochs, have blamed governments for exploiting and profiting from Balochistan's resources while neglecting the development of the region itself. *—PTI*

FACISM, SAY PROTESTERS

Hungary erupts over vote on LGBTQ+ rights

BUDAPEST, 13 APRIL

Wave of protests are sweeping Hungary as its lawmakers prepare to vote on a constitutional amendment curtailing rights of LGBTQ+ communities to conduct events and assemble peacefully.

The amendment, which will almost certainly be passed on Monday by the two-thirds majority of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's nationalist Fidesz party, would permanently codify a ban on public events held by LGBTQ+ communities including the popular Pride event that draws thousands annually in the capital, Budapest.

It provides sweeping powers to use facial recognition software to identify individuals who attend such banned events and penalise them or even have their citizenship suspended if they are deemed to pose a threat to Hungary's security or sovereignty.

The amendment is likely to be passed on Monday by the two-thirds majority of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's nationalist Fidesz party *PHOTO: X*

Some legal experts have argued that such a restriction violates Hungary's constitution. In order to bring the Pride ban in line with constitutional protections, the amendment declares that children's rights to moral, physical and spiritual development supersede any other fundamental right other than the right to life – including that to peacefully assemble.

Viktor Orban, seen as Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in the European Union, has in recent years prohibited same-sex adoption and banned any LGBTQ+ content including in television, films, advertisements and literature that is available to minors.

Thousands are taking to the streets to demand the restoration of assembly rights. Some demonstrators employed the tactic of blocking bridges and major thoroughfares in Budapest, something Orban later said would be prohibited by new legislation.

Reacting to the ban on Pride, local organisers wrote: "This is not child protection, this is fascism." *—PTI*

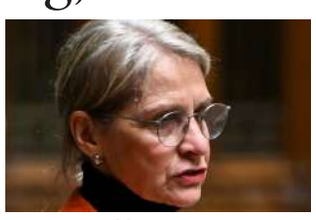
British MP denied entry to Hong Kong, fumes

HONG KONG, 13 APRIL

A British member of parliament was refused entry to Hong Kong last week, the first to have received such treatment since the former British colony's return to Chinese rule in 1997.

Wera Hobhouse, the Liberal Democratic Party representative of Bath, wrote on social media platform Bluesky, "Authorities gave me no explanation for this cruel and upsetting blow. I hope the Foreign Secretary will recognise that this is an insult to all parliamentarians and seek answers from the Chinese Ambassador."

The British Consulate in Hong Kong said it was aware of the incident on Thursday and it was "raising this urgently" with the city's authorities. There was no immediate response from authorities in Hong Kong. However, in similar previous cases, they have said they give no explanations for refusing to allow entry.



MP Wera Hobhouse *PHOTO: HOUSE OF COMMONS*

Hobhouse is one of around 40 MPs on the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China that scrutinises Beijing's human rights record. Beijing objects viscerally to all such criticism and has rendered the Sino-British Agreement under which Hong Kong was turned over to Chinese rule null and void. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Hero MotoCorp retains top slot with 29% mkt share

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Hero MotoCorp maintained its leadership in the two-wheeler retail sales last fiscal with sales of over 54 lakh units amid enhanced competition in the vertical, as per the latest FADA data. Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India took second spot with sales of over 47,89,283 units. Hero MotoCorp sold a total of 54,45,251 units last fiscal with a market share of 28.84 per cent as compared with market share of 25.37 per cent for the Japanese two-wheeler maker, according to the automotive dealer' body FADA. TVS Motor company secured third position last fiscal with sales of 33,01,781 units, achieving a market share of 17.49 per cent. *—PTI*

Healthcare spendings to hit 5% of GDP by 2030

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

India's healthcare expenditure is set to rise from 3.3 per cent of GDP in 2022 to 5 per cent by 2030, according to a report by CareEdge Ratings. The sector is undergoing a major transformation driven by increased public and private investment, policy reforms, and demographic changes. Despite challenges such as rural-urban disparities and a shortage of medical professionals in remote areas, the outlook remains positive. Krunal Modi, Director at CareEdge, highlighted the government's commitment and private sector participation as key to improving access and quality. Expanding health insurance, doubling medical education seats, and increasing hospital infrastructure are seen as vital steps. *—ANI*

Air traffic between India, Singapore crosses 5M mark

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Air travel between Singapore and India has touched a historic high, crossing the five million mark for the first time in terms of passengers in 2024, data put out by Singapore Changi Airport showed. Air passenger traffic was registered at 5.5 million in 2024, up 12 per cent compared to 2023 and surpassing pre-pandemic 2019 traffic by 15 per cent, data showed. India is currently Changi's top sixth market. At present, Changi Airport is linked to 16 Indian cities, including major hubs such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad, with six airlines – Air India, Air India Express, DrukAir, IndiGo, Scoot and Singapore Airlines – providing approximately 280 weekly services between the two countries, Changi Airport said in a statement this week. *—ANI*

Bioenergy summit to be held in Delhi on 8 May

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Over 300 industry leaders, policymakers, academic specialists, and think tank representatives will participate in Bioenergy, Biofuel, and Biomaterial Summit to be held here on 8-9 May, 2025. Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari will inaugurate the summit, said a statement by Indian Biogas Association (IBA). The summit aims to develop an actionable plan for the Indian bioenergy sector. The two-day summit will host stakeholders from all over the industry to discuss emerging opportunities, new technologies, and policy frameworks needed to aid in transitioning of India to a self-sufficient energy economy to ensure a clear road map towards the developed nation. The event is supported by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. *—PTI*

5 of top 10 firms add Rs 84,559 cr in valuation

HUL emerges as biggest winner with Rs 28,700 crore surge

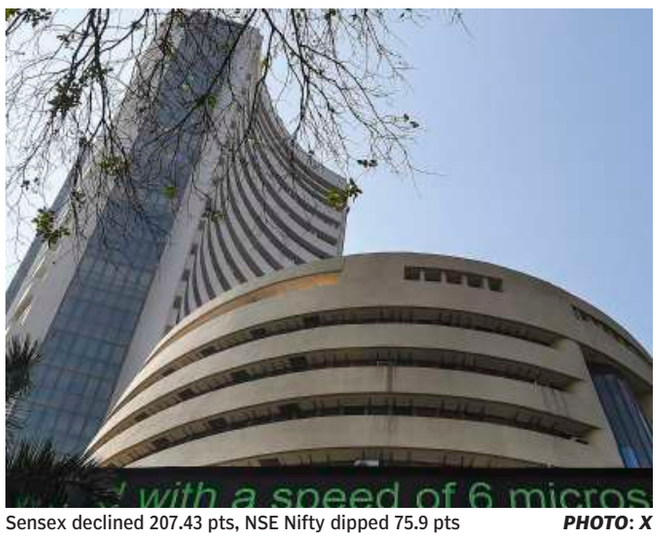
NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 valued firms surged Rs 84,559.01 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Hindustan Unilever emerging as the biggest winner.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex declined 207.43 points or 0.27 per cent. The NSE Nifty dipped 75.9 points or 0.33 per cent.

Indian stock markets were closed on Thursday for Shri Mahavir Jayanti.

While Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and ITC were the gainers, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys faced erosion from their valuation. The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever surged Rs 28,700.26 crore to Rs 5,56,054.27 crore. Reliance Industries added Rs 19,757.27 crore, taking its market capitalisation (mcap) to Rs 16,50,002.23 crore.



Sensex declined 207.43 pts, NSE Nifty dipped 75.9 pts PHOTO: X

The valuation of ITC jumped Rs 15,329.79 crore to Rs 5,27,845.57 crore and that of Bajaj Finance rallied Rs 12,760.23 crore to Rs 5,53,348.28 crore.

The mcap of Bharti Airtel climbed Rs 8,011.46 crore to Rs 10,02,030.97 crore. However, the valuation of TCS tanked Rs 24,295.46 crore to Rs 11,69,474.43 crore. The mcap of Infosys eroded by Rs 17,319.11 crore to Rs 5,85,859.34 crore.

State Bank of India's market valuation dropped Rs 12,271.36 crore to Rs 6,72,960.97 crore and that of ICICI Bank dived Rs 8,913.09 crore to Rs 9,34,351.86 crore. The valuation of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 7,958.31 crore to Rs 13,82,450.37 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and ITC. *—PTI*

Mumbai-based Glenmark is recalling over 25 products in the US market due to Current Good Manufacturing Practice (CGMP) deviations PHOTO: X

Glenmark, Sun, Zydus recall products in US

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Drug makers Glenmark, Sun Pharma and Zydus are recalling products in the US for manufacturing issues, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) said in its latest Enforcement Report.

As per the US health regulator, Mumbai-based Glenmark is recalling over 25 products in the US market due to Current Good Manufacturing Practice (CGMP) deviations.

New Jersey-based Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc is recalling affected lots of medications like Propafenone Hydrochloride extended-release capsules and Solifenacin Succinate Tablets in America, the USFDA said.

It is also recalling products like Voriconazole Tablets, Lacosamide Tablets, Frovatriptan Succinate Tablets and Rufinamide Tablets. The company initiated the Class II recall on 13 March this year.

The US health regulator said Zydus Pharmaceuticals Inc is recalling 3,144 bottles of chlorproMAZINE Hydrochloride Tablets, USP 10 mg, a medication used to treat mental health conditions, like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. The drug firm is recalling the affected lot due to CGMP deviations, the USFDA said. *—PTI*

Amid tariffs, India will be a toy export hub

Indian products can now rival Chinese in terms of both quality and affordability PHOTO: X

KOLKATA, 13 APRIL

As US-China tariff war intensifies, the Indian toy industry leaders are calling the situation a "golden opportunity" to position India as a major export hub for toys, especially US, a trade body official said on Sunday.

US recently imposed a steep 145 per cent tariff on toy imports from China — a move that could reshape the global toy trade.

China, which previously accounted for nearly 77 per cent of US toy imports, is expected to see a significant drop in exports due to the high tariff, opening up space for alternate suppliers, an official said.

Akshay Binjrajka, President of the Toy Association of India, told PTI that India is well-positioned to fill the emerging vacuum.

He added that Indian products can now compete with Chinese offerings on both quality and price.

India's toy exports have already witnessed a steady rise — from USD 40 million in the years 2014-2015 to an estimated USD 152 million in 2023-2024. *—PTI*

India's electronics exports to US have edge over China

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

India's exports of iPhones, smartphones, laptops, and tablets to the United States are now 20 per cent cheaper than those from China, following new tariff exemptions announced by the Trump administration. The US has removed additional duties on electronic items from India and Vietnam, while Chinese exports still face a 20 per cent tariff. According to the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), mobile phone exports from India reached a record Rs 2 lakh crore in 2024–25, with iPhones alone accounting for Rs 1.5 lakh crore. Industry experts say the move offers temporary relief from trade tensions and presents a significant opportunity for India to scale up production and attract global investment. India's growing electronics ecosystem positions it as a strong alternative to China in global supply chains *—PTI*

BOOST FOR CHANNAPATNA TOYS

Amid the ongoing China-US trade war, demand for Indian-made toys has reportedly increased. Channapatna toys, in particular, are emerging as a competitive product in the US market.

- Channapatna toys are traditional toys handcrafted from wood in Channapatna, Karnataka.
- Known as the "Gombegala Ooru – Toy Town of Karnataka," the craft has a history of over 200 years.
- With a population of 71,902, in which 254 people are in home manufacturing units and 50 in small factories
- The craft was promoted by Tipu Sultan and later revived with international support.
- Channapatna toys include dolls, cars, rattles, and educational items.
- They are eco-friendly, durable.

FPIS WITHDRAW RS 31,575 CRORE IN APRIL

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 31,575 crore from the country's equity markets so far this month, in the wake of turbulence emanating from US tariffs, including India.

This came following a net investment of Rs 30,927 crore in the six trading sessions from 21 to 28 March. This infusion helped reduce the overall outflow for March to Rs 3,973 crore, according to data from the depositories.

In February, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) took out Rs 34,574 crore, while in January, the outflow was even higher at Rs 78,027 crore. This shift in investor sentiment highlighted the volatility and evolving dynamics in global financial markets. According to the data, FPIs pulled out Rs 31,575 crore from Indian equities between 1 and 11 April. With this, the total outflow by FPIs has reached Rs 1.48 lakh crore so far in 2025.

"The turbulence in global stock markets following President Trump's reciprocal tariffs has been impacting FPI investments in India too," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments, said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

US textile importers ask Indian biz to bear additional costs

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Textile importers based in the US are reaching out to Indian exporters, asking them to bear the costs that may emanate from the US tariffs going forward, two industry executives told ANI.

If they agree on the importers requests, the industry will feel the heat of shrinking margins on the exported products, the executives say. "We got an email from them (US-based importers) day before yesterday asking for a 10 per cent discount on all the shipments going forward. And this is happening as we speak," said Subin Mitra Founder of Groyyo. Mitra said that while business will come to India but there will certainly be more pressure on margins of the final products than ever before.

As per Mitra the impact of the discounts demanded by the US importers will spill over to the entire supply chain. As per the new conditions, during these three months reciprocal tariff of 10 per cent would be in effect. *—ANI*

India will gain from tariffs: Merc

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

India could emerge as a long-term beneficiary of the ongoing global tariff war, despite short-term shocks, according to Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Santosh Iyer.

While the Indian automotive sector remains largely unaffected by the US tariff measures, Iyer noted that the luxury car segment continues to see positive consumer sentiment, despite global volatility from geopolitical tensions, currency fluctuations, and supply chain concerns.

"For the first time, we're talking about opening our borders for two-way trade. We've always advocated open and fair-trade policies that foster global growth and innovation," Iyer said.

- "For the first time, we're talking about opening our borders for two-way trade." Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Santosh Iyer.

He emphasised that free trade, with low tariffs and reduced barriers, benefits economies and communities.

"Cooperation among larger economies to reduce trade barriers will help in the long run. Though there may be short-term shocks, long-term trade liberalisation benefits the economy," he added.

Iyer said India could benefit from current geopolitical shifts and expressed optimism that trade confidence remains strong.

Though the luxury segment isn't directly impacted, the tariff war has led to rupee depreciation, prompting price hikes in imported vehicles. Looking ahead, he expects the luxury car market to remain flat in 2025, with a possible uptick in the second half if global uncertainties ease. *—PTI*

'Construction firms must reduce

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday asked the construction industry players to reduce import dependency, focus on clean and green construction, and work towards earthquake-resistant and modular infrastructure.

The government initiatives, including 20 new smart industrial cities, improved tourism infrastructure across 50 destinations, and 100 new industrial plug-and-play hubs would help India move from a USD 4-trillion economy today to a USD 30-35 trillion economy by 2047, Goyal added. – ANI

7 of 12 PSU banks see market cap decline: S&P

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Seven of India's 12 largest banks that reported a drop in market capitalisation during the January–March 2025 quarter were state-owned, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Indian Overseas Bank saw the steepest decline among public sector banks, with a 24.7 per cent fall in market cap to Rs 736.63 billion.

Central Bank of India followed, shedding 19.8 per cent.

Among private banks, IndusInd Bank posted the sharpest drop overall, with a 32.3 per cent quarter-on-quarter decline to Rs 506.27 billion.

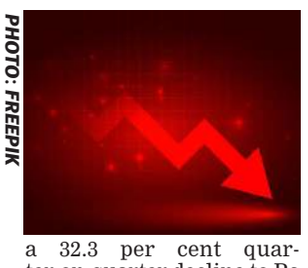


PHOTO: FREEPIK

HDFC Bank remained India's largest bank by market cap, rising 3.2 per cent to Rs 13.989 trillion.

Kotak Mahindra Bank saw the biggest increase, up 21.6 per cent to Rs 4.317 trillion. – ANI

CRUCIAL WINDOW FOR TRADE

US trade policy to undermine Asian businesses

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Uncertainties around the US trade policy will undermine business confidence and consumer sentiment, adversely impacting growth in Asian nations, including India, Moody's Ratings said on Sunday.

US President Donald Trump has postponed by three months the imposition of reciprocal tariffs, with the exception of China on whom a 125 per cent tariff has been slapped. However, a 10 per cent additional duty on exports to the US will continue.

"An escalation of US-Sino tensions and the spillover effects from a slowdown in China pose significant downside risks to the (Asian) region's growth prospects. Economies with large domestic markets, such as India, may benefit from companies seeking access to these markets but any major shift in investment flows would occur over several years," Moody's Ratings Senior Vice President, Credit Strategy & Guidance, Nicky Dang told PTI.

The tariff pause does not reverse the trend of de-globalisation but increases trade policy uncertainty PHOTO: X

The tariff pause does not reverse the trend of de-globalisation but increases the trade policy uncertainty, as the Trump administration's goal of reshoring manufacturing supply chains to the US remains unchanged, Dang said.

Exporters and trade experts in India have been saying that the 90-day period provides a crucial window for pushing the talks on the proposed bilateral trade agreement between India and the US. *—PTI*

Private equity in realty rises 35% in 2025

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Private equity (PE) inflows into the Indian real estate sector reached USD 748 million (approximately Rs 64 billion) during January–March 2025, marking a 35 per cent year-on-year increase, according to a new report from Savills India, the global property consultancy.

The residential segment led the way, attracting around 51 per cent of total investment, signalling growing investor confidence in the housing market.

Key Tier I cities—Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune and Delhi-NCR—remained the primary focus, continuing to attract strong capital inflows.

Commercial office assets accounted for 32 per cent of total investments, with all funding in this segment coming from overseas investors.

Most of this capital was channelled into development assets in Bengaluru and land acquisitions in Mumbai.

Savills, headquartered in London, operates globally with over 700 offices.

Savills India offers a wide range of property services across residential, commercial, logistics, and data centre sectors. *—ANI*

Sourav Ganguly re-appointed as chairperson of ICC

DUBAI, 13 APRIL

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly has been re-appointed as the chairperson of the ICC men's cricket committee, and his longtime national teammate VVS Laxman too has been picked again as one of the panel members, the game's global governing body said on Sunday.

Ganguly, who led the Indian team with distinction for five years from 2000 to 2005, was first appointed as the committee's chair in 2021.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Maertens sets 400-metre freestyle world record

STOCKHOLM, 13 APRIL

FOlympic champion Lukas Maertens of Germany on Saturday broke the men's 400-metre freestyle world record dating back to 2009 at the Stockholm Open. The 23-year-old clocked 3min 39.96sec to shave 0.11sec off the mark achieved by fellow German Paul Biedermann at the world championships in Rome in July 2009. Biedermann's mark of 3:40.07 was achieved wearing a polyurethane swimsuit that has since been banned in competition.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Teen Gout delivers dominant display, claims national title

LONNDON, 13 APRIL

Teenage sprint sensation Gout Gout claimed the Australian title in the men's 200 metres in Perth on Sunday with a dominant display that broke the 20-second barrier with a wind-assisted performance. The 17-year-old crossed the line in 19.84 seconds, a time that eclipsed his national record by 0.2 seconds but which will not count as a new mark due to a wind speed of +2.2 metres per second. "Feels pretty good," Gout said. "That's what I've been chasing, I've been chasing getting that sub 10, focusing on my first hundred, and that's exactly what I did. "I got out, I sent it. Top speed is my gift. I used it, took off and I got sub 20 so I couldn't be happier.—*PTI*

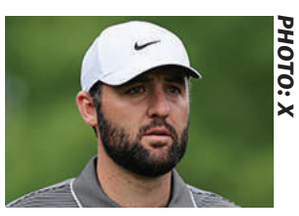


PHOTO: X

Scheffler fails to make a move, trails by seven shots

AUGUSTA, 13 APRIL

The door was open all day for Scottie Scheffler. The defending Masters champion failed to take advantage of time and time again, leaving him seven shots behind leader Rory McIlroy with a round left in his bid to join Jack Nicklaus as the only players to win three green jackets in four years. Scheffler wasn't particularly sharp on Saturday and failed to give himself many birdie opportunities. He spent the vast majority of the day scrambling to save par, and the reality is his even-par 72 could have been much worse. He was at 5-under 211 for the tournament. "At times I felt good, at times I felt bad," Scheffler said. "I just couldn't get anything going.—*PTI*

Kohli, Salt guide RCB to 9-wicket win

This was RCB's fourth win of the season; Rajasthan Royals' scores 173/4

JAIPUR, 13 APRIL

Phil Salt's explosive 33-ball 65 laid the foundation, and Virat Kohli's 100th T20 fifty provided the finishing touch as Royal Challengers Bengaluru cruised to a dominant nine-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in the IPL here on Sunday.

RCB's decision to bowl first paid off on a surface that stayed low and offered variable bounce, even as rising India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal's fluent 75 off 47 balls stood out in the Rajasthan Royals' total of 173/4.On a slow, tacky Sawai Mansingh Stadium pitch where stroke-making was far from easy, Salt's counterattack stunned the hosts.

He smashed six sixes and five fours in his fiery innings, putting RR's bowlers under pressure from the start. His assault, followed by Kohli's ice-cool unbeaten 62 not out off 45 balls (4x4, 2x6), helped RCB chase down 174 with ease, finishing the job in just 17.3 overs. This was RCB's fourth win of the season all coming in away matches. He constantly shuffled across the stumps to access the leg-side and raced to his second fifty of the season in just 28 balls, bringing the required target under 100 in the eighth over.He had moments of fortune along the way. Later, on 40, Jaiswal dropped a sharp low chance at cover, which also offered a run-out opportunity, but the stumps weren't hit.

Salt made the Royals pay dearly for those lapses. Meanwhile, Kohli was happy to play second fiddle, beginning cautiously with just seven off his first six balls.He too had an early life a miscue off Sandeep's slower ball was put down by Riyan Parag at mid-off, a straightforward chance. But the RCB's iconic batter regrouped quickly and settled into his anchor role. Together, the duo stitched a 92-run opening stand, with 65 runs coming in the powerplay alone, a phase that decisively tilted the contest RCB's way.

Salt was eventually dismissed for 65, bowled by Kumar Kartikeya, leaving RCB needing just 82 from 68 balls.From there, Kohli took charge, pacing his innings with 25 singles and picking off the boundaries with surgical precision.

Brief scores: Rajasthan Royals: 173 for 4 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 75, Riyan Parag 30, Dhruv Jurel 35 not out). Royal Challengers Bengaluru: 175 for 1 in 17.3 overs (Phil Salt 65, Virat Kohli 62 not out, Devdutt Padikkal 40 not out). —*PTI*

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli and Phil Salt during the Indian Premier League T20 cricket match between Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru PHOTO: PTI

Our 173-run total was a really good score, but RCB's intent was better

-Sanju Samson, RR skipper

Abhishek creates history with record-breaking 100

HYDERABAD, 13 APRIL

It was a 'random' thought, Abhishek Sharma wrote in his diary that led him to smash the highest individual score by an Indian in the IPL.

Sharma raised the power-hitting bar with a sensational 141 off 55 balls as Sunrisers Hyderabad made short work of the 246-run target set by Punjab Kings to end their four-match losing streak on Saturday. But to his admission, Sharma too was under pressure to perform after a string of failures, and he overcame a bout of sickness to play one of the most memorable knocks in the IPL. Sharma was running a high fever for the majority of the six-day break that SRH got ahead of the home game, but he woke up on Saturday envisioning a match winning contribution. —*PTI*

Desperate CSK look to arrest steep slide against LSG

LUCKNOW, 13 APRIL

Chennai Super Kings have never experienced a worse phase in the Indian Premier League. Their faltering batters will have to deliver to arrest their steep slide in a must-win game against an upbeat Lucknow Super Giants here on Monday.

CSK have never lost five games in a row, including an unprecedented three at the Chepauk, their proverbial fortress. If there is anyone who can get CSK out of the doldrums, it is MS Dhoni, but even his return to captaincy following Ruturaj Gaikwad's injury did not turn their fortunes in their previous outing on Friday.

Considering their struggles against spinners at home, the batters would not mind playing an away game in a desperate attempt to find form. The absence of their best batter, Gaikwad, thus makes their comeback bid all the more difficult.

CSK have been accused of sheltering players past their prime in the past, and those questions have resurfaced after a record losing streak. The lack of power-hitters in their squad has also become a talking point, with Dhoni himself conceding that even targeting 60 runs in the powerplay is a tad too ambitious for them.

Openers Rachin Ravindra and Devon Conway are two fine batters, but expecting them to go hammer and tongs from ball one goes against their style of play. —*PTI*

LSG VS CSK

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	5
LSG Won:	3
CSK Won:	1
NO RESULT	1

LSG vs CSK Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Atalanta revives CL hopes with 2-0 win over Bologna

ROME, 13 APRIL

Italy center forward Mateo Retegui scored one goal and set up another as Atalanta ended a run of three straight losses with a 2-0 win over Bologna on Sunday to revive its chances of finishing in the Champions League places. Atalanta moved back up to third in Serie A while Bologna remained fifth.

Atalanta is two points ahead of Juventus, which beat Lecce 2-1 on Saturday, and four points ahead of Bologna, with the top four finishers qualifying for the Champions League.

Retegui scored his league-leading 23rd goal early on and then set up another for Mario Pasalic less than 20 minutes later.

Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi preserved the advantage when he palmed a shot from Bologna's Dan Ndoye off the post. Both goals came on counterattacks. Bologna hadn't lost since February.

The Rome derby was among the matches scheduled for later. —*PTI*

MONTE-CARLO MASTERS

Alcaraz rallies past Musetti for first title

MONTE CARLO, 13 APRIL

Carlos Alcaraz captured his sixth ATP Masters 1000 title and first in 13 months on Sunday at the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters, where he overcame a physically hampered Lorenzo Musetti.

The 21-year-old Spaniard delivered a composed performance and benefited from Musetti's clear physical issues in the third set to triumph 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 in front of a packed Court Rainier III crowd."It is not the way I would have wanted to win a match," Alcaraz said.

Thinking about Lorenzo, he has been through a tough week, playing long matches. I feel sorry for him. It is one of his best results; ending up like this is not easy. Hopefully, it is nothing serious and he will be 100 per cent soon."Alcaraz arrived in Monte-Carlo off the back of a shock second-round exit in Miami. Back on clay, the 21-year-old rediscovered his groove with gritty three-set wins over Francisco Cerundolo and Arthur Fils, plus straight-set victories against Daniel Altmaier and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina."I am really happy to win Monte-Carlo for the first time.

It has been a really difficult week with a lot of difficult situations," Alcaraz said. "I am proud of how I dealt with everything. —*PTI*

Carlos Alcaraz

Liverpool strengthens its lead with victory over West Ham in the PL

LIVERPOOL, 13 APRIL

Liverpool achieved a valuable victory against its rival West Ham with a score of 2-1 in the match that brought the two teams together in the 32nd round of the English Premier League.

Liverpool opened the scoring through Luis Diaz in the 18th minute, after a precise pass from the outstanding Egyptian star Mohamed Salah. West Ham players managed to score the equalizer in the 86th minute through Andy Robertson, who inadvertently scored an own goal.However, Liverpool players did not give up and managed to score the winning goal in the 89th minute through Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk. With this valuable victory, Liverpool raised its points total to 76, maintaining its lead at the top of the English Premier League table, while West Ham's points remained at 35, placing them in 17th position. Mohamed Salah has reportedly demanded two new signings at Liverpool from rival Premier League clubs after signing a new contract at Anfield. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X / @LFC

MP, Punjab set up title clash in hockey nationals

JHANSI, 13 APRIL

Madhya Pradesh and Punjab won their semi-final matches against Manipur and Uttar Pradesh, respectively, to set up a title clash in the National Hockey Championship here on Sunday. In the first semi-final match, Madhya Pradesh defeated Manipur 5-3 to seal their spot in the final.

Captain Yousuf Affan (5'', 34') and Ali Ahmad (7', 15') scored a brace each for Madhya Pradesh, while Mohammad Zaid Khan (49') also contributed with a goal. Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh (47'), skipper Chinglensana Singh Kangujam (50'), and Laishram Dipu Singh (53') scored for Manipur. —*PTI*

Piastri can take charge of F1 title race in Bahrain

SAKHIR, 13 APRIL

Oscar Piastri can seize the initiative in the Formula 1 title race as he starts on pole position for the Bahrain Grand Prix on Sunday, with his teammate Lando Norris and champion Max Verstappen both further down the grid.

Piastri held off an unexpected challenge from Mercedes driver George Russell to take pole in qualifying Saturday in a sign McLaren is still the F1 team to beat in 2025.

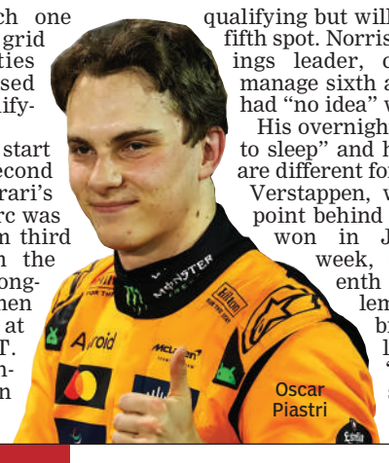
A team mix up cost Russell and Mercedes teammate Kimi Antonelli each one spot on the grid after penalties were imposed after the qualifying session.

Russell will start from the second row, and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was promoted from third to start from the front row alongside Piastri when the race starts at 1500 GMT. Antonelli finished fourth in qualifying but will start from fifth spot. Norris, the standings leader, could only manage sixth and said he had "no idea" what to fix.

His overnight plan? "Go to sleep" and hope things are different for the race.

Verstappen, who is one point behind Norris and won in Japan last week, starts seventh after problems with his brakes and a lack of grip. "We're not sure what to expect at the moment," he said after qualifying. Also in the mix are Leclerc and 18-year-old Kimi Antonelli, who last week became the youngest ever driver to lead a lap in an F1 Grand Prix race.

There's pressure on seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, who starts ninth in a season of ups and downs since he joined Ferrari. Verstappen's new Red Bull teammate Yuki Tsunoda is 10th and is aiming to be the first driver for the team other than Verstappen to score a point since November. —*PTI*



Oscar Piastri

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

India secures playoff spot in style

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

India has etched its name in the history books of tennis by securing a coveted spot in the playoffs of the Billie Jean King Cup 2025. This achievement came after a thrilling encounter against the Republic, where the hosts emerged victorious with a 2-1 scoreline in their final match of the Asia-Oceania Group 1 tournament held at the Mahalunge Balewadi Tennis Complex.

With this victory, the Indian team ascended to second place in the tournament, marking only the second occasion in which India has qualified for the Billie Jean King Cup playoffs, the first being in 2020.

However, the young talent from Hyderabad displayed remarkable tenacity, rallying back to clinch a hard-fought victory with a final score of 5-7, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5), taking nearly three hours to complete the match.

Team India Reach Billie Jean Cup 2025 Playoffs, Elina Svitolina sealed Ukraine's berth PHOTO: X

Svitolina seals Ukraine berth in finals

Elina Svitolina sealed Ukraine's berth in the Billie Jean King Cup Finals for the first time with a 2-1 win over Switzerland, as Britain and Spain also advanced on Saturday.

The three countries join host China, defending champion Italy, and Kazakhstan in the eight-team Finals in Shenzhen from 16-21 September.

Svitolina beat Jil Teichmann 6-4, 6-2 in Radom, Poland, to level the tie 1-1, ensuring Ukraine will finish top of Group E. "I'm very proud of the team for bringing us to the Finals. We've been waiting so long for this moment. —*PTI*

Japan books finals spot with win over Canada

NEW DELHI, 13 APRIL

Japan secured a second consecutive Billie Jean King Cup finals appearance with its 2-1 win over 2023 champion Canada thanks to Ena Shibahara and Shuko Aoyama's 6-3, 5-7, 6-2 win over Kayla Cross and Rebecca Marino in the qualifying doubles decider on Sunday.

Shibahara and Aoyama powered through the opening set 6-3, breaking twice for a quick 3-0 lead. Cross and Marino hit back in the second, edging it 7-5 to level the match, before the Japanese pair regained control in the third.

Canada's 18-year-old Victoria Mboko edged Japan's Ena Shibahara 6-4, 6-7(8), 7-5 in a marathon opening clash.

Mboko fired eight aces to take the opening set after racing to a 2-0 lead. In the second, Shibahara fought back, saving three match points in the tiebreak before levelling the contest.Mboko trailed early in the decider but recovered to break for 4-4, and after squandering three more match points. —*PTI*